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# THE TIMELESS MOMENT

*by*

WARNER ALLEN

. . . . for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments.  
—T. S. ELIOT. *Little Gidding*.

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## TO THE READER

**T**his book tries to tell the story of an unfinished journey. It deals with the first two stages of the Mystic Way—the Dawning of the Light and the Interpretation of the Vision—but no more is said of the road that lies beyond—the Living of the Vision and the Meaning of Enlightenment—than a few stray hints and scattered, perhaps misleading, anticipations such as a traveller may glean of the way he has to go from the distant prospect of some hilltop on his road. The story of a search for hidden treasure usually ends with the finding of the treasure and we learn little of the essence of the adventure—what the adventurers did with their treasure when they had found it. We are told how the Wise Men of the East, guided by a star, accomplished their quest and rejoiced with exceeding great joy, but we are left to guess what that revelation meant to them when they had departed into their own country.

It is the author's hope that he may be able at a later date to round off this preliminary inquiry into the nature of what is sometimes called the mystical experience with a fuller study of its significance in daily life. His indebtedness to those who have helped him on the way is for the most part acknowledged in the text. Here he would like to express his special gratitude to his friend, Dr. E. Graham Howe, healer of souls, who was the first to impress on him the distinction between 'I' and 'Me', the subjective and objective selves, on which this interpretation of the Vision is based.

To Dr. W. R. Inge his thanks are due for personal encouragement and the profound wisdom of *The Philosophy of Plotinus*.

March, 1931  
8, Bloomfield Terrace, S.W.

March, 1946  
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# PART I. THE DAWNING OF THE LIGHT

This is the last and sternest contest set before the Soul, this the sum of all her labours, to win through to the Beatific Vision. Blessed is he who beholds that blessed sight, and he who fails in that fails in all — PLOTINUS, *Ennead* 1, 6, 7

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## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MYSTIC VISION AND CONSCIOUSNESS

✓ To be conscious is not to be in time,  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden .  
Be remembered; involved with past and present

T. S. LILOI, *Burnt Norton*

The mystic insight begins with the sense of a mystery unveiled, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of a doubt. The sense of certainty and revelation comes earlier than any definite belief. The definite beliefs at which mystics arrive are the result of reflection upon the inarticulate experience gained in the moment of insight — BERTRAND RUSSELL, *Mysticism and Logic*

**T**o the mystic, the Beatific Vision, 'the intersection of the timeless moment', is the revelation of reality, the unveiling of the mystery of God. Mysticism, the doctrine of enlightenment, is a word derived from a Greek verb which probably means to close the eyes that one may better perceive the invisible. The Vision is seen with closed eyes by that faculty of spiritual sight which Plotinus, the great Neo-Platonist, says is common to all men but used by few. Pater in *Plato and Platonism* prefers to think that 'mysticism' refers to the closing of the lips, 'while the spirit is brooding over what cannot be uttered', and Pythagoras, the philosopher of number and music, set the example of the closed lips—the secrecy and silence in which the mystery was enveloped except for the initiated.

There are three aspects of the Vision: on the one hand, the reality and

## The Dawning of the Light

mystery which may be called Union with God or Mystic Union; on the other, the revelation or unveiling which falls into two parts, first, Illumination which breaks into the experience of life like a flash of lightning in the darkest night, and then Enlightenment, the memory of the unique event, enshrined in the symbolism of memory images and words.

There is only one Mystic Union as there is only one Truth, but its reflection in Illumination, and still more its memory in Enlightenment, shorn of its timeless radiance by the mist of time, is distorted into a multitude of fancies and interpreting symbols by the diversity of the minds which reflect it.

‘Life like a dome of many-coloured glass  
Stains the white radiance of eternity.’

Union with God transcends reason and intellect, but it is only by thought and intellectual discipline that the reality underlying this multitude of symbolic appearances and explanatory dreams can be discerned.

Modern mystics have been less discreet than Pythagoras and have fallen into ill repute; for too many of them have taken the easy way of indolent credulity and contempt of reason. Though their heads be among the stars, they must keep their feet firmly planted on earth. There are no short-cuts to the kingdom of heaven and orgies of emotionalism and unreasoning enthusiasm however well-intentioned are no more to be trusted as a guide than

‘The ignis fatuus that bewitches  
And leads men into pools and ditches.’

Since clear-thinking is the basis of all intellectual discipline, it will be well at the beginning to examine closely the meaning of certain words which we shall have to use again and again.

What do we mean by consciousness? It is the paradox of life that the most familiar and intimate attribute of humanity is the last thing any human being can explain or define. Consciousness, it is said, is a fundamental idea which admits of no definition, for without it nothing can be defined and it is impossible to go behind it or outside it. Psychologists may paraphrase it as ‘the distinctive character of whatever may be called mental life’ or as designating ‘the common and generic feature



## The Divine Purpose

ing against the dangers which beset the developing organism and it is as yet too soon for Ego to learn to love the enemies which he must fight for dear life. The law of tooth and claw establishes fear and hatred as two guardians of the organism and very gradually they are pressed aside by the law of love. A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, the rule of thumb of reprisal and revenge still plays a part in the evolution of Experience and the mysterious curse of sin with the sense of guilt which cries out for punishment finds a dark satisfaction in the idea of eternal damnation. In the attempt to hate the sin and love the sinner, sin and sinner are apt to be confused.

If we read the Vision aright, Sin, Evil, pain and death are the inevitable failures in that forlorn hope of Love, the reconciliation of the perfection of the One with the imperfection of the Many, the ideal with the real. The One in Love must always try to bring into the Many the order of its own identity and its failure is the condition of its Love. So God knows not only Love, but endeavour, adventure and creation. That there is something positive in Evil, as an eminent divine once assured me, I cannot believe. The One is the Good and Ego shares its goodness. Ego's will is always set on the best, but his intentions are defeated or at best hampered by the imperfection of the instrument through which he has to work. The One did not lay aside power and wisdom to undertake an easy task, but to face disappointment and despair. With nothing but the erratic compass of Experience and perhaps the glimpse of a star seen through the cloud-wrack to set our course, we steer the 'now' as best we can through fog and storm and our voyage is not ended when at last we anchor in the port of death.

I have seen many cities and sounded the hearts of many men and at the end of the journey, I am surprised not at the prevalence of evil, but at the abundance of good. Even in these days when the devil may seem to have broken loose in our civilization, the mystic's faith in humanity, life and God—the message of the Vision—still stands unshaken. My Experience confirms what I believe is the verdict of Psychology expressed in the old jingle.

'There is so much bad in the best of us  
And so much good in the worst of us  
That it ill befits the best of us  
To say what we think of the rest of us.'

## The Dawning of the Light

must have been drawn to reflect on what Kant calls the great and inexplicable mystery, viz., that man should be both his own subject and object, and that these two should be one.'

In *Anima Poetæ*, Coleridge tells how he himself came much nearer than Hume to cornering his elusive Ego by one of the recognized approaches to the Vision, the concentration of attention on a single object, and if he had been able to carry the process a step further, he might have been rewarded by an understanding of himself that would have transformed his whole life.

'*The Ego*. By deep feeling we make our ideas dim, and this is what we mean by our life, ourselves. I think of the wall—it is before me, a distinct image. Here I necessarily think of the *idea* and the thinking *I* as two distinct and opposite things. Now let me think of myself, of the thinking being. The idea becomes dim, whatever it may be—so dim that I know not what it is; but the feeling is deep and steady, and this is what I call *I*—identifying the percipient and perceived.'

The fashionable idea of consciousness accepts Hume's negative conclusion. It is represented as an ever-flowing stream of conscious perceptions, feelings, thoughts, images, memories and so on—all of which we shall sum up for convenience under the single word 'Experience'—inextricably intermingled and perpetually changing. There is a general acceptance of Heraclitus' dictum that no man can cross the same river twice, for on the second crossing neither the man nor the river will be the same. Everything is in a state of flux, not least the human self.

In this view, the illusion of an abiding unity in consciousness, a permanent self or Ego, is derived from the gradual change of the conscious elements of our Experience. Though they are all being modified, transformed and replaced, enough of them remains substantially unchanged and, as it were, crystallized by memory, for a long-enough time to produce a plausible semblance of permanence and continuity. Though the Ego we know to-day may have lost almost every trace of the Ego of childhood, we regard it as the same Ego, because it has no more than our body undergone a sudden and complete transformation and rupture with the past. The Thames is still the Thames, though its waters run down unceasingly to the sea before our eyes and fresh waters take their place.

The identification of consciousness with conscious experience has

## The Mystic Vision and Consciousness

the great attraction that it glosses over the real problem of consciousness by playing on the ambiguity of its meaning. At first sight there is nothing self-contradictory in the proposition that the idea of a permanent consciousness, a lasting conscious Ego, has arisen from the gradual transformation of our states of consciousness or conscious Experience. Yet a moment's consideration will show that in the foregoing sentences we have been using the words 'consciousness' and 'conscious', each with two distinct meanings. When we speak of a permanent consciousness, a conscious Ego, we are referring to a conscious subject who knows both that he does exist and that something that is not himself also exists. His consciousness is the faculty by which he comprehends his own existence and also apprehends the existence of reality outside himself.

When we speak of conscious Experience, we do not mean that Experience comprehends or apprehends anything at all. Our thoughts, feelings, memories and so on, are conscious neither of their own existence nor of a reality outside themselves; they are merely objects of Ego's consciousness. Does a conscious feeling like a toothache know that it exists? Does my idea of a triangle know that it has three sides? Most certainly not. States of that consciousness which the dictionary defines as 'the totality of a person's thoughts and feelings' are merely the objects of which the conscious subject is aware.

Language protects us from attributing the observer's faculty of vision to its objects, visible things, and the case is the same for the other senses. There can be no such word as 'conscious-able' analogous to 'visible', 'audible' and 'sensible', and there is a real danger of attributing the subject's faculty of consciousness to objective Experience, when we talk of states of consciousness and apply the epithet 'conscious' to such abstract words as thought, motive, action, and the like. Let the river of Experience flow as it may, though the waters of its past may be held up by dykes and weirs of memory to produce a semblance of continuity, it will never know that this is so, and is no more likely to develop a consciousness of its own existence or of anything else than the Thames itself. Experience is always non-conscious, if anything in the universe is; its existence depends on its objective relation to a conscious subject. These remarks appear to the writer to apply with equal force to F. H. Bradley's 'sentient experience'.

Nor is this all. It appears from what we have said that the consciousness of Ego has a dual nature; for he is conscious both of Ego (i.e. self-

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conscious) and non-Ego. The habitual omission of 'self' before 'conscious' leads to much confusion and the word 'self-conscious' to describe Ego's faculty of knowing that he exists is unsatisfactory both from its derogatory implication and the equivocal uses of 'self' which are almost as deceptive as those of 'consciousness'. Ego's consciousness of Ego is poles apart from his consciousness of non-Ego and in order to distinguish between them, I propose henceforth to restrict the word 'Consciousness' to the former meaning and to use the word 'Awareness' for the latter, so that we shall say that Ego is conscious of Ego and aware of non-Ego. We shall never use the words 'Consciousness' or 'conscious' except in reference to a subject conscious of its own existence. The justification of this essential discrimination will appear in the course of the argument.

Ego's consciousness of his own existence has always been a stumbling block to philosophers and scientists, many of whom assert that it is an impossibility. What can philosophy or science do with a subject who is his own object? It is a contradiction in terms. The scientist's point of view is expressed in a sentence by Mr. J. M. Dunne: 'There could be nothing rational in a Jones who was aware (we prefer to say "conscious") of Jones and Science could have no dealings with such an individual.' Yet if I interrupt an argument with Mr. Dunne and ask him, 'Do you exist?' he can only reply in the affirmative, for a negative answer would reduce him and the argument to an abrupt conclusion of blank nothingness. It is true he might limit his statement by introducing the time factor. 'I do exist at this moment which I call "now",' but with this proviso his certainty must be absolute.

Mr. Dunne tries to dispose of the problem by a theory based on an Infinite Regress, an infinite series of Ego's or observers with the real conscious subject at infinity, to which reference will be made later, but I cannot think that Serialism offers a satisfactory solution of the difficulty. However I may define Ego, whether as a conscious subject here or at infinity, a stream of Experience or, like the Behaviourists, as a bundle of conditioned reflexes, I must affirm his existence at the moment I speak. When Descartes chose *cogito ergo sum* as the sure foundation stone of his philosophy, he fell into the weakness of complication. The unchallengeable truth he sought lay in the pronoun absorbed in the terminations of his verbs—Ego. 'I' is an affirmation of existence, though 'I' cannot be thought but only thought about.

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The mystic cannot define the conscious subject as Experience in any form without denying the Vision which reveals the inmost mystery of the Self stripped of the veil of Experience. Philosophers argue that an Ego emptied of Experience would be an Ego void of content and therefore nothing. Here mystics all the world over flatly contradict the reasonings of such philosophers. Whatever the Vision may be it cannot be nothing. Neither Plato nor Dante nor the Sages of the East were inspired by nothing. Both the genius and the ordinary man are agreed that Ego exists and knows that he exists. How can the identity of subject and object be both a self-evident fact and a contradiction in terms? Somehow the Vision must be reconciled with reason; for it is the affirmation, not the denial of life.

Bergson has argued that in our days philosophy has come to a dead end, because it refers all problems to the intellect, and the universe is of such a nature that intellect cannot solve all its problems. The poet laughs at the rules of logic and mathematics cannot explain a masterpiece of painting or sculpture. It is tempting to make use of Bergson's terms, intellect and intuition, but it must be said at once that he identifies Consciousness with the stream of Experience and his intuition throws no light on the mystery of Ego. The world of Experience, the world of the intellect, owing to the limitations of thought, has no place in it for the subject which is its own object. Yet we cannot deny the reality of Consciousness which is the identity of subject and object. It must therefore belong to some other order of things, perhaps a world of intuition which supplements or transcends the world of reason, though the mystic may call it by another name.

Philosophy admits that reason must justify the identity of subject and object in the case of the omniscient and all-comprehending One or Absolute. The One could know nothing and would therefore be nothing, if it did not know itself, because by hypothesis there is nothing outside itself to know. It must be both subject and object; 'the object has been completely carried over into the subject, and has therefore become in all its determinations combined with the unity of the self,' to quote Professor Watson's definition of perfect knowledge in *An Outline of Philosophy*. It is argued, however, that the One with its corollary of absolute knowledge of reality expressed in complete self-knowledge lies utterly beyond the grasp of our finite minds and the limitations of human thought, so that it must be for us as if it did not exist. Yet

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zone the light fades gradually away into unfathomable night. If attention is relaxed, the light will spread over a wider field with a less vivid illumination. Whenever deliberate action in the outer world is required, Ego's attention is focussed on the inrush of new impressions, for his intervention must take account of the latest information from the sphere in which it is to be exercised. There are, however, times when there is no pressing need for such action and the light of Awareness, unconstrained by attention, may wander at random over memories which are generally hidden in the night of forgetfulness, or Ego may withdraw entirely from Experience as in trance or the deepest sleep.

The mystic is only indirectly concerned with the nature of that third world, the physical universe, outside the boundaries of the Self which seems to condition so much of his Experience, though he must take it into account as he lives in it. His chief concern is with the order of Consciousness and the world of Awareness, and their relations. In the third world, space is added to time as a limitation of thought and our incursions into the time-space world which is the domain of Science will be only occasional.

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It is precisely this reality with which the Vision is concerned and to which the Ego isolated by our analysis of 'consciousness' seems curiously akin. It would appear that Ego, the conscious subject, participates mysteriously in the nature of that Absolute which lies beyond the reach of our intellect and which theologians identify with God.

The distinction we have drawn between Consciousness and Awareness is fundamental; it is no mere splitting of hairs, for the one is a contradiction in terms and the other expresses that normal subject-object relation which lies at the root of all thought. A great gulf is fixed between a mirror which reflects an object without knowing it, and a mirror that reflects itself and knows it. Ego's Consciousness belongs to one order of things, the order of the One, his Awareness to another, the order of the Many, and his participation in two worlds raises a problem which must be faced. How it is that Ego has become *aware* of his own Consciousness, how he has formulated in the thoughts of his Experience even a contradiction in terms to suggest its nature, are mysteries which the student of the Vision cannot ignore.

It will be seen later that the ambiguity latent in the ordinary usage of the word 'consciousness', like almost all such verbal equivocations, is a partial representation of a truth; for it is the law of Ego's being that he should try to identify himself with the stream of his Experience.

We have said that we mean by Experience all thoughts, feelings, perceptions, memories, all that stream of abstractions which forms our waking and dreaming life. It must be remembered that Ego can be directly aware of nothing except such abstractions and, though it is his habit to project many of them outside himself and build them up into the form of an external world to which—sometimes not without hesitation—he attributes material substance and reality, he can only be aware of what has penetrated within his Self.

The word 'Experience' must be taken to include not only everything which Ego has actually experienced in the course of this existence, but also every memory, feeling and instinct, lying latent and potential in the depths of his world of Awareness, which, experienced perhaps by other units of Consciousness or in other lives, has been handed on to him by heredity and nature. It covers, therefore, the psychologist's 'subconscious' or 'unconscious', which we shall call the Under-Mind to avoid the confusion arising from these terms.

In a preceding paragraph we employed the word 'Self'. It is com-

## The Mystic Vision and Consciousness

monly used without discrimination as the equivalent either of Ego, Ego's Experience, or that combination of both which constitutes the entirety of the inner life. It is highly important from our point of view to distinguish between the three meanings of this little word. 'Self', with an initial capital, will be used exclusively in its widest sense as Ego and Experience combined to form the individual's Private Universe, that domain beyond the bounds of which no conscious subject apart from his Mystic Union can stray. If over and above its reflexive use, we have occasion to employ 'self' in either of its partial meanings, it will be qualified by an explanatory epithet: the subjective or transcendental self standing for Ego, the objective or phenomenal self for Experience. The confusion arising from the indiscriminate use of 'self' is illustrated by the paradoxes of Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*.

We have spoken of Ego's Awareness as his faculty of apprehending non-Ego that is Experience, in contradistinction to Consciousness, the faculty by which he comprehends Ego. Awareness is accompanied by attention, the power of concentrating, as it were focussing, the light of his Awareness on a given portion of Experience. At any given moment or 'now', a certain number of objects are or may be presented simultaneously to his Awareness, and we shall regard all these objects as contained in a field of Awareness, observation or presentation. Anything of which Ego is aware at any given moment must be present in this field which moves ceaselessly in time and represents the 'now' for each conscious subject or observer.

It is clear that Ego at any moment is only aware of an insignificant fraction of his Experience. Experience is rather a world of time than space, because its states are successive and do not seem to be external to one another, but it cannot be discussed without the use of spatial metaphors. We may liken it to a sea which, with whirls and eddies and the swell of memory, stretches out in all directions to be lost in utter unlimited darkness. Ego's Awareness, usually concentrated by his attention on the Experience in which he is for the moment specially interested, throws as it were a spotlight on the troubled waters. This little illuminated patch, which we shall call the zone of attention, marks Ego's 'now', and in normal waking life the light of his Awareness is focussed on the point where new Experience is pouring in through the senses from the outer world as from a spring beneath the waters to mingle inextricably with past Experience or memories. All round that



## CHAPTER TWO

### 'THE INTERSECTION OF THE TIMELESS MOMENT'

I look'd for universal things . . .  
And, turning the mind in upon itself,  
Pored, watch'd, expected, listen'd; spread my thoughts  
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt  
Incumbencies more awful, visitings  
Of the Upholder of the tranquil Soul,  
Which underneath all passion lives secure  
A steadfast life.

Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, Book III

He to whom all things are one, who draweth all things  
to one, and seeth all things in one, may enjoy true peace  
of mind and rest of spirit.—JEREMY TAYLOR, *Via Pacis*.

Countless men and women of every age, creed and language have made public profession of their faith in the Mystic Vision and the written records of this spiritual experience fill many volumes. Millions in the East have never dreamed that its reality could even be questioned and in the West we are compassed round by a great cloud of witnesses to its truth. It is no part of the present writer's purpose to compile an anthology of descriptions of the Vision, which in the manner of their telling are as varied as the talents, temperaments and traditions of those who wrote them. Each one interprets his recollection of something that defies memory according to his upbringing and ability, and the greatest and least are agreed that words are powerless to represent the light that shone in their darkness. 'Divine things,' says St. Thomas Aquinas, 'are not named by our intellect as they really are in themselves, for in that way it knows them not, but they are named in a way that is borrowed from created things.'

In the East the great religions have been built on the rock of the Vision. Special disciplines have been elaborated for its attainment and

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science has not disposed of their efficacy by hinting darkly at self-hypnotism. They differ widely in their prescriptions which range from a rule of extreme austerity, the most rigid control of mind and body with prayer and fasting and complete seclusion from the world, to that Chinese school which would have body and mind relaxed and at peace with themselves and the world and which ordains that the searcher after the light must not give up his ordinary occupations. Master Lu Tzu said: 'When occupations come to us, we must accept them; when things come to us, we must understand them from the ground up. If the occupations are regulated by correct thoughts, the Light is not scattered by outside things, but circulates according to its Law.' 'The true mystic,' writes Ewald, 'never withdraws himself from the business of life, not even from the smallest business.' The various stages by which the mystic must pass on his way to the full realization of the Vision have been analysed and catalogued with the utmost nicety, so that he may journey on from strength to strength, until at will he can cast off the trammels of sense and free himself from the wheel of things.

In the West, among the Christian saints and schoolmen, we find an equally detailed classification of spiritual experience. St. Thomas Aquinas distinguished between visions bodily, imaginary and intellectual, between visions, apparitions and hallucinations, and Santa Teresa was perpetually exercised as to the nature of the revelations which were so persistently vouchsafed to her.

As for the Angelic Doctor, one would like to think that Robert Bridges was right in his 'surmise' that St. Thomas made no further attempt to classify visions and laid down his pen for good, because the Vision itself had come to him and shaken his faith in 'the main premiss' of his mighty *Summa*, 'the myth of a divine fiasco'.

'I am happier in surmising that his vision at Mass—  
in Naples it was when he fell suddenly in trance—  
was some disenthralment of his humanity;  
for, thereafter, whether 'twere Aristotle or Christ  
that had appeared to him then, he nevermore wrote word.'

In his trance he learnt, perhaps, that what lies behind all visions, Union with God, transcends all classification. Be that as it may, the attempts made by the sages of the Occident and Orient to distinguish between various classes of visions and special kinds of trance and

## The Intersection of the Timeless Moment

abstraction need not detain us in this place; for only the reflections of the truth and the means by which it can be realized in Experience are susceptible to analysis, not the truth itself. Yet such essays at systematization have a real practical value, since they emphasize the need of submitting to reason the emotions aroused in the world of Experience by the Vision with the same rigour with which the poet imposes upon his wildest imaginings the rules and order of his art.

The great artists of the world have by the magic of their genius interpreted the meaning of the Vision as truly as the most subtle theologian. Through their work the light of the One illuminates the world of the Many. The mystic poets spare no extravagance of superlatives in their endeavour to enshrine in words the miracle they remember. Nothing short of the language of love, white-hot with the metaphors of physical passion, could paint the raptures of the soul which has been chosen as the bride of Christ, and there is something rather disquieting in this assimilation of spiritual delight and carnal ecstasy. Mr. Aldous Huxley remarks that the spiritual rhapsodies of Crashaw, Santa Teresa's worshipper, are sometimes 'almost embarrassingly explicit' in their references to physical passion.

'Delicious deaths; soft exhalations  
Of soul; dear and divine annihilations;  
A thousand unknown rites  
Of joys and rarefied delights;  
An hundred thousand goods, glories and graces;  
And many a divine thing,  
Which the divine embraces  
Of the dear Spouse of spirits with them will bring.'

Again, in his *Hymn to the Name and Honour of the Admirable Saint Teresa*, Crashaw writes:

'O how oft shalt thou complain  
Of a sweet and subtle pain!  
Of intolerable joys!  
Of a death, in which who dies  
Loves his death, and dies again,  
And would for ever so be slain;  
And lives and dies, and knows not why  
To live, but that he still may die!

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How kindly will thy gentle heart  
Kiss the sweetly-killing dart!  
And close in his embraces keep  
Those delicious wounds, that weep  
Balsam, to heal themselves with thus,  
When these thy deaths, so numerous,  
Shall all at once die into one,  
And melt thy soul's sweet mansion;  
Like a soft lump of incense, hasted  
By too hot a fire, and wasted  
Into perfuming clouds, so fast  
Shalt thou exhale to heaven at last  
In a resolving sigh, and then,—  
O what? Ask not the tongues of men.

Santa Teresa herself was ordered by a spiritual director to burn a treatise she wrote on the Song of Solomon in the mystic language 'which tells of the delights of Bridegroom and Bride within the flowery bed of Solomon which is the inmost heart of the soul'. A part of this impassioned sermon was saved from the flames and eventually received the sanction of orthodoxy. 'Let my Lord kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for thy breasts are better than wine.' 'Thy breasts are better than wine because of the savour of thy good ointments.' 'I sat under the shadow of my Beloved and his fruit is sweet to my mouth.' 'Stay me with flowers and comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love.' These were some of the texts which the Saint chose for the edification of her nuns, because no other language could express her rapturous union with Christ.

From Dante's first love for Beatrice, transfigured beyond all earthly desire, was born that supreme apocalypse of divine revelation, the *Paradiso*. 'Post Dantis Paradisum', wrote Cardinal Manning, 'nil restat nisi visio Dei.' No greater lord of language than Dante ever sought explicitly to give expression to the Vision and no mystic has emphasized more strongly the utter powerlessness of memory and words.

On no account must the Vision be regarded as the exclusive property of saint and genius. 'The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the spirit.' The Mystic

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Union unperceived may be compared to the silence which is the background of all music. The Vision is not the monopoly of virtue or intellect, nor is it the exclusive privilege of any religion. Neither Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Taoist, nor the follower of any faith, can claim it as the peculiar possession of his cult. It comes alike to the simple-minded and those of little learning as well as to sages and erudite divines, to men of no particularly high standard of morality as well as to the saint, the pagan, agnostic and atheist. It is like the rain of heaven which falls upon the just and the unjust, upon the wise man and the fool. Plato and Plotinus built their philosophy upon it and not even Dante's genius surpassed the unearthly insight with which the great pagans penetrated into the beatitude which belongs to the contemplation of the eternal.

Plotinus insists that the Vision is for him who will see it. It needs no special gifts or inspiration, only the use of a faculty which all possess and only few employ. Coleridge, in *Anima Poetæ*, identifies the Quakers' inward light with the Vision of the Neo-Platonists.

'In Plotinus the system of the Quakers is most beautifully expressed in the Fifth Book of the Fifth Ennead (he is speaking of "the inward light"): "It is not lawful to inquire from whence it originated, for it neither approaches hither, nor again departs from hence to some other place, but it either appears to us, or does not appear. So that we ought not to pursue it as if with a view of discerning its latent original, but to abide in quiet till it suddenly shines upon us, preparing ourselves for the blessed spectacle, like the eye waiting for the rising sun."'

Non-action, says Lu Tzu, must be attained by action. The mind must be prepared, but its attitude must be passive.

The Vision, sometimes sought, more often unsought, comes to very humble folk, indeed not infrequently to those whom one might consider as the most unlikely people. Santa Teresa on whom it forced itself almost against her will thought that to seek it deliberately was labour wasted. It certainly came unsought and unexpected in a time of stress and danger, real or imaginary, to a certain lady now dead, whose beauty had been her fortune and a great one at that. It came as an illumination and a voice saying, 'Be brave and fear not and all will be well'. 'I was brave', she used to say, 'and all was well.' For sinner and saint the message was the same—courage. It cannot truly be said that the experience turned her into a sweet-tempered, unselfish woman; she

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would have hated to be one. Yet in her old age, when the spoilt beauty had become a domineering tyrant, there lay behind all her eccentricities and caprices a background of faith in the unseen that raised her high above her riches and redeemed her most foolish indiscretions.

Though in one sense the Vision is the spring of all action, its interpretation in conduct may have little or no relation to morality. The Roman Catholic Church is wise in its generation when it postpones judgment on the source of such a revelation, whether it be the work of God or the Evil One, until it has put forth its fruit in daily life. A curious book entitled *Cosmic Consciousness*, by a Canadian, Dr. R. M. Bucke, uncritical but impressive in its naïveté, contains a heterogeneous collection of the conditions and circumstances in which the experience of the Vision has entered the lives of a multitude of people who have little or nothing else in common. It is a little hard to be patient with an author who thinks Shakespeare was the pen-name of Francis Bacon, identifies the 'lovely boy' of the Sonnets with Cosmic Consciousness, and doubts if Wordsworth is 'quite a poet', but his simplicity disarms criticism.

In all this mass of material, it is difficult at first to separate the essential basis from the symbols by which each writer expresses his memory of the Mystic Union and the imagery with which he adorns and conceals it. One might be tempted to think that the dreams of Blake and Swedenborg or the raptures of Dante and Juan de la Cruz, in themselves so different, could have nothing in common with the ordered and dignified beatitude of Plato's contemplation of the Good or the waveless serenity of the Eastern Nirvana. Must we say then that there is not one Vision but many Visions and that as there are many ways of attaining Enlightenment and many stages of its attainment, so the root of the whole matter, the Union with God, varies with every mystic? No, as we said in the beginning, there is only one Mystic Union and one Truth.

There is, indeed, a certain monotony in the matter of the stories of the Vision which is only redeemed by the manner in which they are told. No one who has studied this adventure of the Self will doubt the unique and identical character of the Union which is the heart of the Vision in all its manifestations. Its Protean semblance arises only from the powerlessness of Experience to receive, memory to recollect and language to express a visitation from another order of being. Those

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who can claim even a faint remembrance of its coming are agreed that it is the selfsame revelation which appears to the genius and the fool, to the Eastern mystic and the Christian saint, to the ascetic and the average sensual man.

Analysis discloses in all the tales of the Vision certain constant elements which account for their fundamental sameness. Where all is gained, something must first be lost. Darkness is never far removed from the splendour of the Light which can only be reached through the valley of the shadow. To enter the kingdom a man must die and be born again. 'The awakening of the spirit', says the Chinese Sage, 'is accomplished because the heart has just died. When a man can let his heart die, then the primordial spirit wakes to life.' The part of the Self which belongs to time and Experience vanishes as though it had never been and the mystic's first impressions—his Illumination—dumbfound him with the realization that he is not what he thought he was, that he is one with God.

In the opening canto of the *Paradiso*, Dante fixed on Beatrice his eyes dazzled by long gazing on the sun and the vision of her beauty filled him with this same indescribable feeling of stupefaction. He uses the word 'trasumanar' ('transhumanize'), for this transfiguration of his humanity, and since words cannot express his meaning, he falls back on a classical allusion, which, he says, will be understood by those to whom the experience of enlightenment has given grace of understanding. He felt as Glaucos, the Bœotian fisherman, must have felt when after tasting a magic herb he found himself a god and at that, a god not of heaven or earth, but of that mysterious element, the sea. Dante lost what he once regarded as his familiar self, his Experience, his character and temperament with all their virtues and faults, and so the light of the Vision brought with it a sense of death and annihilation.

In exchange there came the sense of deification. Loss and darkness were counterbalanced by a great light, the light of the sun and Beatrice's eyes. The Tibetan Buddhists call this revelation the Clear Light of the Void. There is nothing in the world of time and space so closely akin to the Vision as light, and the mystic often finds it difficult or impossible to distinguish between the two in the world of his Experience. Light is the bridge that links the universe of the One with the Universe of the Many, the world of Consciousness with the other

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two worlds—it seems to be present in all—and Dante's *Paradiso* is a veritable apotheosis of light.

'Of operative single power,  
And simple unity the one emblem,  
Yet all the colours that our passionate eyes devour,  
In rainbow, moonbow, or in opal gem,  
Are the melodious descant of divided thee.'

(George Macdonald. *Light*.)

When the Holy Trinity appeared to Santa Teresa, all three Persons, with one Substance, one Power, one Knowledge, one God, were heralded by a blaze of radiance like a cloud of brightest light. The Unseen Light of Christ's presence which illumines the understanding, she tells us, is brighter than the sun. There shined about St. Paul a light from heaven and he was three days without sight. So Juan de la Cruz, in his cell, saw a heavenly light so bright that for three days his eyes were weak as if he had been gazing on the sun in its strength.

A certainty of a special order accompanies the Light of the Vision. It is a certainty of the same kind as that which forbids me to deny my own existence, and it offers a peculiar difficulty to the devout Christian when he tries to describe his experience. He feels that he has grasped the key to the riddle of the universe and the answer to all problems. All doubt and anxiety are swallowed up in a sense of unity with the divine. Yet it is hard for sinful man to claim that he is one with God. He dare not say, 'I am God,' for instinctive fear that such blasphemy may most justly provoke His wrath and indignation. One can only admire the ingenuity with which Dante by his appeal to classical mythology skirted this dangerous pass.

Emily Brontë faced the difficulty without fear or compromise.

'O God within my breast,  
Almighty, ever-present Deity!  
Life—that in me has rest  
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee! . . .

'Though earth and man were gone  
And suns and universes cease to be,  
And Thou were left alone,  
Every existence would exist in Thee.



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‘There is not room for Death  
Nor atom that his might could render void:  
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,  
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.’

Hand in hand with the spiritual presumption of this claim to Godhead go feelings of the deepest humility and a conviction of utter unworthiness of the blessing vouchsafed. If the seer of the Vision is raised to the heights of Godhead, he is also abased to the level of the worm. For he must accept all things, however humble, as his brothers and sisters. Woe unto those who are blind to this side of the Vision! for pursuing false ideals, they will turn the Vision against itself and bring misery on themselves and disaster on others.

All mystics are agreed that the Vision leaves behind it the satisfaction of all desire, manifested according to the seer's nature in ecstatic raptures or the peace that passes understanding—the memory of absorption in something greater than Self and of complete union with the Absolute of the philosopher or the God of the theologian. This coalescence with the One is often taken by those who have not experienced it as the equivalent of personal annihilation, and some of those who have may seem to confirm this belief owing to the shortcomings of language. As we have said, the eclipse of the temporal Experience with which we are wont to identify ourselves gives birth to an illusion of death and annihilation. The false Ego disappears in darkness, but it will be found that the true Ego, even in the moment of complete consummation, does not lose his individuality; his unity is an infinitesimal fraction of the larger unity, but still a unity in itself. Otherwise it would be impossible for even the faintest image of the Mystic Union to penetrate into individual Experience and the whole adventure of differentiation would have to begin anew.

It may seem a work of supererogation to add to the descriptions of the Vision yet another account and that lacking perforce the philosophical profundity and mastery of thought and language which have earned for so many the laurels of immortality. The plain unvarnished tale has been told over and over again and repetition is a weariness of the flesh, but the reader should know that the writer is writing because he must—the compulsion of the Vision is upon him for the sake of his own instruction and the ordering of his thought with no more than

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the faintest hope that what he writes may strike a note in some other heart. There is only one method in such an inquiry, the method of introspection, and though the results of self-analysis must be remorselessly checked by the recorded experience of others, no searcher can keep himself entirely out of the picture. The study of the Ego is bound to be egoistic and the student cannot be entirely detached from the subject.

When the writer was on the threshold of fifty, it occurred to him, as it must have occurred to many another ordinary journalist, no less hostile to the apparent sloppiness of fashionable mysticism than he was, that he had lived for nearly half a century without discerning in life any pattern or rational purpose. His views on the matter might have been roughly summed up in a vague notion that the meaning of the universe was shrouded in impenetrable darkness by the Powers of Life and Death, for fear that life should lose its savour as a brave adventure, if the mystery of death and suffering was solved and uncertainty was exchanged for the assurance of future beatitude. A curiously vivid dream shook his faith in this tentative explanation of human ignorance, though he could not possibly have said what the appearance in his sleep of a light brighter than the sun had to do with the matter. Almost before he knew it, he found himself involved in the task of recalling everything he could remember of his past life in the hope of tracing some pattern and design that underlay its outward incoherence and fitting the disjointed episodes of his thoughts, feelings and actions into the unity of a rational purpose. This quest of truth led through paths of unforeseen darkness and danger, but within a year of clock-time an answer came.

It flashed up lightning-wise during a performance of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony at the Queen's Hall, in that triumphant fast movement when 'the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy'. The swiftly flowing continuity of the music was not interrupted, so that what Mr. T. S. Eliot calls 'the intersection of the timeless moment' must have slipped into the interval between two demi-semi-quavers. When, long after, I analysed the happening in the cold light of retrospect, it seemed to fall into three parts: first the mysterious event itself which occurred in an infinitesimal fraction of a split second; this I learned afterwards from Santa Teresa to call the Union with God; then Illumination, a *wordless* stream of complex

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feelings in which the experience of Union combined with the rhythmic emotion of the music like a sunbeam striking with iridescence the spray above a waterfall—a stream that was continually swollen by tributaries of associated Experience; lastly Enlightenment, the recollection in tranquillity of the whole complex of Experience as it were embalmed in thought-forms and words.

Since words are the only currency in which a writer can deal, it might seem impossible for him to go outside the third stage of the Vision, when the simplicity of the original event amalgamated with other Experience has been measured and divided by thought and language into the arbitrary sections defined by words. Memory, however, preserves not only the final representation in its clear-cut shape, but also the more or less shadowy traces of the process which led to it. Hence Bergson's distinction between voluntary and spontaneous memory. If we have learnt a poem by heart, we can not only repeat the poem itself—the final result of our effort, but also recall something of the stages through which we passed before it was mastered word-perfect. So something may still be said of the Union proper, the timeless event, and the first reaction of Experience to its light, Illumination, before intellect had imposed its form upon it and it became Enlightenment.

The Mystic Union will be discussed at length in the following chapter. Here as a prelude to the final recollection in tranquillity, we may consider for a moment the intermediate stage of Illumination. It was a time of mingled feeling and dawning thought. In the coalescence of new and old Experience, inchoate phrases were beginning to shape themselves. A dim impression of the condition of the objective self might be given by a jumble of incoherent sentences. 'Something has happened to me—I am utterly amazed—can this be that? (*That* being the answer to the riddle of life)—but it is too simple—I always knew it—it is remembering an old forgotten secret—like coming home—I am not "I", not the "I" I thought—there is no death—peace passing understanding—yet how unworthy I—'

The classic example of Illumination, expressed in the incoherent language of exclamatory emotion, is provided by the amulet sewn by Blaise Pascal into the lining of his clothes and found there after his death. It bears the stamp of immediate reaction and is naturally impregnated with that deep Christian feeling which marked his genius,

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L'an de grâce 1654,

Lundi, 23 novembre, jour de saint Clément, pape et martyr, et autres  
au martyrologe,

veille de saint Chrysogone martyr, et autres,

Depuis environ dix heures et demie du soir jusques environ minuit  
et demi,

Feu,

Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob,  
non des philosophes et des savants.

Certitude, Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix.

Dieu de Jésus-Christ.

*Deum meum et Deum Vestrum.*

'Ton Dieu sera mon Dieu.'

Oubli du monde et de tout, hormis Dieu.

Il ne se trouve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Evangile.

Grandeur de l'âme humaine.

'Père juste, le monde ne t'a point connu, mais je t'ai connu.'

Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie.

Je m'en suis séparé;

*Dereliquerunt me fontem aquae vivae.*

'Mon Dieu, me quitterez-vous?'

Que je n'en sois pas séparé éternellement.

'Cette est la vie éternelle, qu'ils te connaissent seul vrai Dieu, et  
celui que tu as envoyé, Jésus-Christ.'

Jésus-Christ.

Jésus-Christ.

Je m'en suis séparé; je l'ai fui, renoncé, crucifié.

Que je n'en sois jamais séparé.

Il ne se conserve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Evangile.

Renonciation totale et douce.

Soumission totale à Jésus-Christ et à mon directeur.

Eternellement en joie pour un jour d'exercice sur la terre.

*Non obliviscar sermones tuos, Amen.*

The reader may find it interesting to contrast the words, set down by Pascal that night of ecstasy and with engaging childlike simplicity sewn into the lining of his coat, to keep the memory of the immediate impression ever fresh and undefiled, with those written by Santa

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Teresa just after the Mystic Union, as she tells us, quoted in the following chapter. It is curious that the Spanish Saint while sharing Pascal's certainty and joy should have been more concerned with the intellectual paradox of spiritual experience than the French Jansenist whose education had been mathematical and scientific. His attention was concentrated on the emotions aroused in him which answered his questions in the way he desired, as the Vision always does. Fire is the only descriptive touch in his account. The Enlightenment that followed found general expression in the *Pensées*. For the present writer when memory became articulate, there emerged the symbolic story of a journey into the heart of the Self told as follows.

Rapt in Beethoven's music, I closed my eyes and watched a silver glow which shaped itself into a circle with a central focus brighter than the rest. The circle became a tunnel of light proceeding from some distant sun in the heart of the Self. Swiftly and smoothly I was borne through the tunnel and as I went the light turned from silver to gold. There was an impression of drawing strength from a limitless sea of power and a sense of deepening peace. The light grew brighter, but was never dazzling or alarming. I came to a point where time and motion ceased. In my recollection it took the shape of a flat-topped rock, surrounded by a summer sea, with a sandy pool at its foot. The dream scene vanished and I am absorbed in the Light of the Universe, in Reality glowing like fire with the knowledge of itself, without ceasing to be one and myself, merged like a drop of quicksilver in the Whole, yet still separate as a grain of sand in the desert. The peace that passes all understanding and the pulsating energy of creation are one in the centre in the midst of conditions where all opposites are reconciled.<sup>1</sup>

Charles Morgan calls Emily Brontë's lovely stanzas 'the clearest, the most persuasive description of mystical experience in our language'.

'But first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;  
The struggle of distress and fierce impatience ends.  
Mute music soothes my breast—unutter'd harmony  
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

<sup>1</sup> For Nicolas of Cusa, the coincidence of contradictories, the reconciliation of the opposites, is the wall that encloses Paradise, the place where God is found by revelation.—*Visio Dei*, cap. 9, etc.

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"Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;  
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels;  
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbour found,  
Measuring the gulf, it stoops, and dares the final bound.'

*The Prisoner.*

## CHAPTER THREE

### UNION WITH GOD

. . . One interior life  
In which all beings live with God, themselves  
Are God, existing in the mighty whole,  
As indistinguishable as the cloudless east  
Is from the cloudless west, when all  
The hemisphere is one cerulean blue.

WORDSWORTH

It is as if a raindrop fell from heaven into a stream or fountain and became one with the water in it so that never again can the raindrop be separated from the water of the stream; or as if a little brook ran into the sea and there was thenceforward no means of distinguishing its water from the ocean; or as if a brilliant light came into a room through two windows and though it comes in divided between them, it forms a single light inside. —Santa Teresa in the *Castillo Interior*, speaking of 'spiritual marriage', the highest degree of Union with God.

Tu vita es animarum, vita vitarum, vivens tu ipse, et non mutaris,  
vita animae meae.—ST. AUGUSTINE.

**T**he modern world looks askance at visions and miracles. It has no machinery for dealing with them, no criterion by which to judge their metal and temper, no system of religion or philosophy to constrain their disruptive force. Science will have no truck with them and rightly, since they belong to a world in which the writ of science does not run. Religion and philosophy have been broken under the iron rod of science, and faith in the unseen banished from human life. Safety lies in denial of the supernatural. No wonder the ordinary man dismisses all visions wholesale as delusions akin to madness, though in the depths of his being their very mention may call up a stirring of dark primeval superstition.

Sometimes, however, the Vision forces its way into Experience with

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a certainty that cannot be questioned and brings with it storm and earthquake to shatter the habit-frozen sea of everyday existence.

‘The moving billows of my Being fell  
Into a death of ice immovable;  
And then—what earthquakes made it gape and split . . .’

In the writer's case, its first coming borrowed something from the serenity of the music with which it mingled, but soon its calm was broken by an upheaval within the objective self. From the first turmoil and commotion there emerged a burning desire to go up to the house-tops and proclaim the good news to an astonished world. Happily there were friends to remind him that the prophet should make sure of his message before he sets out to convert the world. The Vision must be interpreted before it is preached.

Like all the great forces of nature it is liable to work destruction and disaster, if its activity in time and space is not directed and controlled. In the absence of religion and philosophy, it can only be restrained by the discipline of thought and emotion and, if this discipline is wanting, its violence may rend the world asunder. It is so easy to plunge headlong into a wild orgy of blind optimism and well-intentioned raptures before the meaning of the Vision has been grasped, let alone expressed in intelligible terms. Enthusiasts rush out impetuously to remake the world, before they have set their own lives in order, and the high promise of the Vision is betrayed by the blind leading the blind. The fervent missionary may degrade his vocation into an escape from his own personal problems and from the painful task of solving them.

O Vision of God, what crimes have been committed in thy name! *Corruptio optimi pessima!* The false interpretation of the Vision has drowned our material civilization in a sea of ruin and senseless cruelty. Sick Messiahs and silly gospels have cursed our generation and the witlessness of noisy cranks and quacks has perverted inspiration into an infection of insanity which has maddened whole nations. Theories of Chosen People and Herrenvolk, with their devilish Utopias, have thrown up a poisonous growth to choke that comprehension of love and the divinity of life which should be the harvest of the Vision. Its message must be fitted into the pattern of life as it is, a pattern which without its guidance we cannot trace, and it must not be dishonoured



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in service of some obsession which defies reason and reality. It is a mighty power for good or evil and whether it blesses or blasts depends upon its interpretation in Experience. As Plotinus said, Reason is King and the last court of appeal.

The new-fledged mystic must be sure of his good tidings before he ventures, however humbly, to follow in the steps of preacher and prophet. It is not enough to cry on the house-tops: 'There is an answer to all problems, a key to all the riddles of the universe, and I have found it.' What has happened to him has happened to thousands before and their Enlightenment has done no more than produce the world we live in. Convinced, as he may be, that he has heard the voice of God, he must submit his enthusiasm to discipline, vigilance and the study which is prayer. If a man would be a Messiah, he should prepare himself for crucifixion.

The sixteenth century was wiser in its generation than the twentieth. Though it knew little of what we call the wonders of science, it was not blind to the existence of a reality that lay beyond the reach of the senses. Its civilization consisted of the impregnable castle of revealed religion, built upon the foundation of the Scriptures and cemented with Aristotelian philosophy; its only weakness lay in the unnoticed quicksands of ever-shifting Experience which spread beneath its foundations and which were bound one day to bring its towers and battlements crashing to ruin. In the days of Santa Teresa, in Spain especially, the castle of Holy Church, guarded by the Inquisition and a people's faith, rose like a living rock defying assault from without or schism within. It did not welcome new miracles or visions—tradition provided enough and to spare and new revelations suggested a possibility of change in the changelessness of orthodoxy—but since they could not be entirely suppressed, a lodging within the walls was prepared for them. Before they could pass the gates there were passwords to be answered and counter-passwords given, and proof had to be shown that they came not from the Enemy as spies, but as envoys from the court of the King, who was lord of the castle, with letters patent from the King himself or his Son.

So when Teresa de Cepeda Dávila y Ahumada, to give the Saint her name in the world, began to be beset with visions of extreme intensity in her convent, the question which arose was less of their truth and validity than of their origin. Did they proceed from God or

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the Devil? The modern mystic, unless he is a devout Roman Catholic—and devotion is rare nowadays—has, as we have said, no standard by which he can estimate the value of his experience, for modern religion has little concern with visions. Santa Teresa, on the other hand, found awaiting her a complete system of rules to test the nature of her visions, divine or diabolical, and father confessors to apply the touchstone of tradition.

The nature of these visions to which Santa Teresa attached even greater importance than the Mystic Union will be considered in a later chapter, when they will be taken in unexpected connection with the Tibetan Book of the Dead as memories of the Illumination which follows the Union clothed in vivid images of her religion. We shall then have to take into account her upbringing and character, in other words the Experience in which the Union was reflected and expressed. For the moment we are concerned with the period of Illumination when the Union appears in Experience as a series of contradictions and paradoxes.

The Saint tells us that Union with God can be reached by prayer, if God wills, and she classifies with a certain vagueness the forms of devotion which may lead to this consummation. From vocal prayer, the searcher after God proceeds to the state of quietness, when there is no longer need to send messengers to Him or cry aloud, for He is so near that it is enough just to move the lips. At this moment there must be no wild pursuit of words and reasons, no forcing of repentance or the sense of unworthiness; for this moment is the spark of divine love which God is kindling in the soul. 'The soul must understand with calm and wisdom that one cannot deal with God to good purpose by dint of violence and that our struggles are no better than great logs of wood piled on without discretion to quench this little spark.'

The stirrings in the soul of the mystic and the genius are the same. So Shelley writes of the poet:

'A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry". The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.'

The attitude of acceptance and tranquillity to which the mystic is

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now aspiring is outlined by St. Augustine in the 9th Book of the *Confessions*, following Plotinus.

'If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the images of earth, and water, and air, hushed also the poles of heaven, yea, the very soul be hushed to herself, and by not thinking on self surmount self, hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every tongue and every sign, and whatsoever exists only in transition. . . .'

In the *Hui Ming Ching*, the *Book of Consciousness and Life*, St. Augustine's expectant hush finds expression in the following poem.

'A radiance of light surrounds the world of the mind.

We forget each other, quiet and pure, all-powerful and empty.

Emptiness is lighted up by the radiance of the Heart of Heaven.

The sea is smooth and mirrors the moon on its surface.

The clouds vanish in blue space.

The mountains shine clear.

Consciousness dissolves itself in vision.

The disk of the moon floats solitary.'

Teresa tells us that if the spark of divine love becomes a flame, there follows the true Mystic Union, a state in which she traces several degrees of fulfilment. To begin with, the senses and faculties may still be active. In the state of quietness, the soul is carried far from the world to enjoy the peace of Mary, the sister of Martha, lost in contemplation. In the earlier degree of Union, it may still play the part of Martha, careful and troubled about many things. It can be at once active in the world and rapt in contemplation of the divine, occupied with works of charity or other business suitable to its condition, though all the time it knows that the better part of itself is elsewhere. 'It is as if we were talking to one person and at the same time another person was talking to us, and our attention was divided between them.'

This power of communing with God was a great refreshment and comfort to the Saint when she was wrestling with the endless problems and practical worries which filled her earthly life. With one of those vivid homely similes which she loved and which remind one of Dante, she compares this state of partial Union to the satisfaction of a person who has eaten well, enough to stay the cravings of the appetite, but not enough to prevent him eating something particularly good and tempting. So the soul is content and asks nothing more in this world,

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but not so content that it does not yearn for even closer Union with God.

The fourth state of devotion, complete Union, can only be attained when all the faculties are in a condition of suspended animation, and it lasts but a short time; if for half an hour, that is more than she had ever experienced. The obscurity of her language on this point suggests that she was puzzled by the timelessness of the Mystic Union. It seems to have recurred to her instantaneously several times during some hours of meditation.

Memory and imagination—Experience in fact—wage perpetual war against the achievement of this complete detachment, persistently calling back the attention to the world and its cares. If they are overcome and reduced to passivity, the mystic enters the inmost mansion of the Interior Castle, the room which lies in the very heart and centre of the Fortress of the Soul, where things of great secrecy pass between the soul and God.

What are these things of great secrecy? This is what the Saint says of them:

‘Let us come now to the heart of what the soul feels in this place. Only he who knows can say, for there is no understanding it, let alone saying it. When I wished to write these words (I had just communicated and had been in this state of devotion which I am describing), I was thinking about what my soul had been doing then. My Lord spoke these words to me: “Forget yourself utterly, my daughter, leave it to me; now it is not you who are alive, but I; you cannot comprehend what you understand and that is understanding without understanding.” Those who have had such an experience will understand something of this: it cannot be expressed more clearly, since what happens there is so obscure. I can only say that one seems to be united with God, and a certainty in which it is quite impossible to cease believing is left behind. In this place, all faculties are so completely suspended that there is no understanding what they are doing. If you were engaged in meditating on a station of the Cross, the memory of it is lost as if it had never been; if in reading, there is neither attention nor recollection as to what you were reading; if in prayer, the same. Here memory, that poor importunate little moth, has its wings singed and flutters no more. The will must be absorbed in loving, but it does not understand how it loves; the understanding, if it understands, does not

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understand how it understands; at least it cannot comprehend anything that it understands.<sup>1</sup> It does not seem to me that it understands, because, as I have said, one does not understand. I cannot succeed in understanding this. I started in ignorance, for I did not know that God was in all things<sup>2</sup> and as He seemed to me so present, it appeared to me impossible; I could not help believing that He was there, because it seemed to me so clear that His very presence was there.'

I have translated her words as literally as I can. The Spanish genius has a peculiar affection for the form of speech called oxymoron, that combination of contradictions, which Tennyson carried to the fringes of absurdity in the stock instance:

'His honour rooted in dishonour stood  
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.'

The chivalresque romances which she devoured as a child abounded in them, as the reader of Don Quixote will remember, but it was not an innate love of antithesis which made her pour out this flood of affirmations and negations. It was simply bewilderment. Her strong practical intellect revolted against the contradiction in terms which the Vision forced upon her Experience as reality. She knew it was impossible and she knew it was true and so she understood without understanding and could not comprehend what she understood. It was the inevitable confusion that arises from the failure to distinguish between Consciousness and Awareness.

At the outset, her spiritual advisers were convinced that she was being tempted by the Devil and ordered her to employ all the weapons of the Faith against his malice and guile, holding a crucifix in her hand and crossing herself continually when she felt herself being carried into this debatable country. Nor was that all; if the person of Christ appeared to her as happened more and more often, she was to insult her God with that vulgar gesture to which Shakespeare refers when Pistol says:

'When Pistol lies, do this; and fig me, like  
The bragging Spaniard.'

What Pistol did was to close his hand and stick out the tip of his thumb

<sup>1</sup> Seeing we do not see, understanding we do not understand, penetrating we do not penetrate.—Richard of St. Victor.

<sup>2</sup> God is in all things everywhere and always.—St. Thomas Aquinas.

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between the first and second fingers, as the Spaniard was wont to do to ward off black magic or convey the mortal insult that the person at whom his thumb was pointed was cursed with the evil eye. This resort to the crudest superstition, probably obscene in its origin, was worse than telling the poor lady to cock snooks at God, for all the time she was absolutely convinced that she was seeing God Himself. It was agony to her, but God consoled her, praising her obedience to her confessor and promising that the truth of His presence should be made known. The time came when she found that this same gesture was highly effective in routing the imps of Hell who for so long tormented her.

From the first, the memory of the Mystic Union troubled her with thoughts of the Devil; for, as she says, she did not know that God was in all things. A Christian with such a deep conviction of sin and such a terror of Hell might well be perturbed to find the Sinless One within her Self, in the inmost chamber which is 'I'. To say 'I am God' would be pure blasphemy and she does not quite say it, though her spiritual language comes as near to saying it as her religion would permit. This instinctive shrinking from the identification of God and Ego, Dante's *trasumanazione*, embarrasses all Christian narrators of the Vision, though in the East where the Deity is scarcely more personified than the Platonic Idea, it is expressed with less reserve.

Eventually after years of trials and tests, the authorities of the Church were persuaded that Santa Teresa's experiences were what they purported to be, divine revelations, and bade her no longer struggle against them, giving her license to impart to the nuns of her Reformed Order those practices of devotion which, if God willed, might lift their souls also into the beatitude of Union with Him. The message of her Vision was officially interpreted as yet another divine confirmation of orthodoxy.

Many modern mystics in this age of scepticism are unable to accept the interpretation of the Vision in the terms of orthodox Catholicism, consecrated though they are by the wisdom of tradition and antiquity, and are compelled like the present writer to translate its significance into another language with which they are more familiar. When they have overcome the first temptation of a premature apostolate, they are faced by another question. Are they to abandon worldly occupations and devote the rest of their lives to the pursuit of the Vision and of the

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felicity that springs from the memory of Union with God? For Santa Teresa, the question was already answered. Her vocation imposed upon her a golden mingling of celestial meditation and worldly activity. 'Martha and Mary', she told her daughters in God, 'must come together to entertain the Lord and not entertain Him badly by giving Him nothing to eat. How could Mary show Him hospitality, always seated at His feet, unless her sister helped her.' Her homely common sense carries with it the conviction of the highest wisdom.

Those whose life is not so ordered face a natural yearning to return again and again to the source of their revelation and perpetuate its bliss, letting the world go hang. Plato's philosopher, once lost in the contemplation of the Good, needed constraint to bring him back to earth, that he might devote his wisdom to the profit of his fellow-citizens. In the East, the call to complete withdrawal from the pleasures and pains of everyday life is regarded as the ultimate significance of the Vision, the return to the changeless and valueless perfection of the One from the chequered and adventurous values of the Many. The ideal of perfect detachment from all worldly things whether good or bad beacons the mystic's road through the births and rebirths imposed upon him by his *karma* to the final goal of freedom from further incarnation.

The immemorial Experiences of East and West lie poles apart and it ill behoves the European unskilled in Oriental thought and language to pass judgment on a belief which by heredity and upbringing he cannot criticize with sympathy and understanding. It is even more unfitting that he should attempt to imitate the ways of the East and undertake spiritual journeys for which he is totally unequipped. The unassimilated wisdom of the East has been responsible for much crazy foolishness in the West. The day may come when the other-worldliness of the Orient may be reconciled with the worldliness of the Occident in a golden Middle Way, but that day is still far distant.

Nevertheless many Europeans have practised not without result the discipline and exercises prescribed by the Eastern Sages for entry into the Bliss of the One and release from the wheel of things. Some of them the writer attempted and made a little progress along the Way, enough to show that they led to the same goal as Santa Teresa's devotions, to the inmost mansion of the Castle of the Self. He never again attained that vividness of memory which has been described or perhaps each fresh memory was swallowed up and lost in the light of the pre-

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vious recollection which we are calling Enlightenment. If the Western searcher after the Vision turns to the East for instruction, he will be more likely, I think, to find congenial assistance in the moderation of Chinese Taoism as expressed in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, translated by Wilhelm with valuable notes by Jung, the psychologist, than in the Indian Scriptures. The approach to the Vision is described as 'the circulation of the Light', and some notes made when I was seeking to make the Light circulate in accordance with Lu Tzu's instructions may possibly be of interest to the reader.

The eyes should be turned inwards as they are turned outwards to a sunset or a mountain. We ask nothing from sunset or mountain, neither beauty nor peace nor rapture. We do not seek to change the colours of the clouds or the outline of the peaks, but we accept them as they are and an impression of beauty or peace or rapture comes as if by accident.

Similarly when the gaze is turned inwards into the Self, there should be no craving for vision or peace or comfort. 'Different things', says Lu Tzu, 'appear to each person according to his gifts.' One meditates for the sake of the Truth, not for occult powers nor for converse with angels, not for ecstasy nor for escape from life. That is what Lu Tzu means by the attainment of purposelessness through purpose. Truth is the purpose that implies acceptance and renounces effort, since effort distorts the truth.

Many in contemplation see the truth, but do not recognize it, because they look for light when their truth is apparent in darkness.

Those who have seen the Vision are neither higher nor lower in the scale than those who have not.

Meditation is not the final object of this life. If it were, the incarnation of God would be unnecessary. Contemplation is an attribute of the Absolute. Love is the condition of incarnation.

The final note was written when it had dawned upon the writer that the systematic pursuit of the Vision was not for him. Whatever the revelation might mean for others, for him its message implied no withdrawal from the world; on the contrary it proclaimed with no uncertain voice the supreme value of Experience. In time of fear, trial and sorrow, inward contemplation girds the sufferer with the proof armour of patience and acceptance, but it does not mean desertion or flight from the battle. Moreover it appeared at last that a persistent quest of



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this spiritual emotion to the exclusion of earthly adventure was labour wasted, since the Mystic Union in the shape of Consciousness is with us always, though we may be blind to its presence, as the eternal background of all life. It is enough to know that it is there and life is transfigured in the glory of its light.

But that is to anticipate. If the Vision was not to be proclaimed to the world with missionary enthusiasm nor was life to be devoted to its pursuit, one thing remained. It could not be ignored. Its reality must serve as the foundation of some general theory of life which would certainly be very different from that vague and hesitating optimism that had been the starting point of the writer's inquiry into himself. He had no religion like a Roman Catholic with a niche ready made for the image of the Vision. Somehow its message must be reconciled with the dictates of reason and common sense as he understood them. The timeless moment slipped into the interval between two demi-semi-quavers demanded many years of hard thinking and meditation, an untiring struggle to check the findings of introspection by the conclusions of wiser men and to piece together the fragments of the puzzle into a design intelligible to the inquirer, even if it were meaningless to others.

The search for fuller Enlightenment led through many zigzag paths and something will be said later of the author's meanderings through this maze. The analysis of Consciousness with which this book began, marked a final stage of the journey after the study of many brain-puzzling questions concerning time, memory, sleep, death, what is usually called the supernatural, the nature of mind and Experience, to mention only a few. Here we will set down a very brief summary of the conclusions reached at the end of this long pilgrimage, leaving to final chapters a fuller statement of their terms.

First and foremost the Mystic Union which with Illumination, its immediate appearance in Experience, and Enlightenment, its complex expression in memory, forms the Vision, appears as an instant of pure Consciousness, when Ego is conscious of Ego alone and aware of nothing, withdrawn from all that fabric of Experience with which he falsely identifies himself. 'When', says the Buddhist, 'thou hast understood the dissolution of all fabrications, thou shalt understand that which is not fabricated.' The Vision is Ego's realization of himself in the Many as belonging to the One.

It is argued that a conscious subject deprived of his object, that is

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Experience, would be an Ego without content and therefore nothing, and this argument is unanswerable in the world of time and phenomena, the world of the Many. But, as we have said, it is the essence of the Vision that the symbol of a reality from the order of the One in which the identity of subject and object is a logical necessity enters into the order of the Many to which it cannot belong and in which it cannot be adequately expressed. The conception of the One is often regarded as a philosophical hypothesis incapable of proof. We hold that the vision confirms the absolute certainty of its presence within ourselves, a presence which even without the Vision no man can deny without self-contradiction.

We have spoken of an instant of pure Consciousness, but this is to impose the limitations of the temporal on the eternal, for the identity of subject and object is conceivable only in the timeless being of the One. Consciousness in itself cannot be split into periods. It has neither past nor future, but always is. Ego is only subject to time in his Awareness of Experience. The Vision is the direct penetration of the One into the world of Experience, and the Illumination and Enlightenment which belong to it are held in memory.

We are like troglodytes who were born underground and have lived all their lives in the utter darkness of a cave, still capable of seeing though they have never seen. One day by some chance, a landslip perhaps, a little hole is opened in the roof of their cave and through the chink darts a ray of the sun which is blazing on the slopes of the mountain outside. The gap is instantly closed by falling earth and rocks, but for that instant a sunbeam has penetrated into the blackness. Their eyes are dazzled; they have neither thought nor word to express the sensation of light, but when it has gone, it leaves behind a memory and an idea. Presumably the sense of touch would be the most developed of the cave-dwellers' senses and they would try to record in terms of touch the memory of their visual experience.

So the Vision leaves behind it a memory and idea which can only be shaped out of the material available and the shape it takes depends on the nature of the Experience into which it flashed. We may talk of selfhood, the conscious subject, the synthetic unity of apperception and so on, but the memory symbol differs as much from its original as the troglodyte's conception of light from its reality or Mercator's projection from the actual surface of the three-dimensional globe.

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Consciousness which is timeless is incommensurate with time. Its record in Experience has no more in common with its truth than printed music or the grooves of a gramophone disk with the music they register. We may say of the Vision what Shelley says of poetry: 'It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it.'

If Consciousness is timeless, it can suffer no interruption of its continuity. How then are we to account for those periods of 'unconsciousness' with which sleep, trance and anaesthetics make us familiar? The Mystic Union is eternal, but our Awareness of Consciousness is liable to interruption; indeed the symbol of Consciousness, 'I', has only made its way into the cycle of life in which we live at a relatively advanced period and even now we very rarely think of what we mean by it.

There is a well-known paradox which quibbles on the verbal confusion between Consciousness and Awareness. For the greater part of our lives we are conscious without being conscious of consciousness. If we distinguish between Ego's Consciousness of Ego and his Awareness of non-Ego, the contradiction vanishes. Ego is continually conscious without being aware of the idea of Consciousness. Consciousness abides for ever without beginning, interruption or end; its reflection in Experience, whether it arises directly from the Vision or indirectly from philosophic thought, comes as a rare visitant to the world of Experience from another sphere in the form of a contradiction in terms. We say that a man is 'unconscious' in deep sleep or trance, under an anaesthetic or when he has been knocked out by physical violence, but we really mean that he is unaware or insensible. His attention has been recalled from the zone of his Awareness by the paralysis of his senses and a temporary darkness obscures all Experience. Yet the light of the One still shines within in its own universe, in the Mystic Union, but in Experience a gap is opened which we shall call Oblivion.

It has always seemed to me a strangely irrational notion that Ego whose very essence is Consciousness and knowledge of his own identity—if he loses that, he loses everything—should on occasions be utterly despoiled of his being and annihilated, only to reappear with identity unchanged. It is as though he became nothing for a time and was regularly re-created out of nothing in defiance of reason and

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common sense. When we recover our senses, we are usually aware of an interruption in our Experience, but since we are normally aware of Experience without being aware of Consciousness, this break in Experience does not imply a break in Consciousness. We cannot remember pure Consciousness—in the timeless One there can be no memory—though we can remember the symbol or images we have chosen to express it. The word 'unconscious' is utterly misleading in this sense and we must use for it 'insensible' which expresses Ego's temporary blindness to the Experience derived from the senses.

If Consciousness is always with us even when we are not aware of it and we can never be separated from it, there would seem to be no need of prayer and fasting, breathing exercises and inward contemplation to bring about a state of affairs which never ceases to be. The mystic is deceived, if he thinks that his pious exercises have been rewarded by one exultant moment of Union with God, for all things living are always united with the One. We often look everywhere for our spectacles when we are still wearing them, pushed carelessly back on the forehead.

These practices of devotion and self-control, zealously performed by mystics all over the world, should have another purpose. They create no new relation with God, but they bring something new into the world of Experience, the vivid feeling of Union with the divine, the reflection of pure Consciousness necessarily blurred and incomplete, since the One cannot be expressed in terms of the Many, yet none the less an image of the Truth. This certainty, as Santa Teresa knew, enlightens the whole objective self. Ego is a denizen of two spheres; his abiding home is in the timeless universe of the One, but he is—and always will be—a sojourner in time by virtue of the law which compels him to identify himself with his Experience. The necessity of this law of the divine nature can be grasped by the intellect, as we shall see, though intuition first informs us of its existence.

Ego is like an actor who outside the theatre has his own life to live and his own character and temperament to deal with, though on the stage he must throw himself into his part and wipe his private life out of his memory. The comedian does not allow the thought of a family sorrow to take the edge off his funniness nor the tragedian admit into the grim climax of the play a glimpse of the merry supper that awaits him after the play is over. Yet as Miss Dorothy Sayers points out in

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her admirable *The Mind of the Maker*, a good actor must never lose touch with that essential part of himself, his art, which so unobtrusively controls every gesture and accent and which is most intimately his and his only. Similarly the actor on the stage of life should pay perpetual attention to the truth that underlies all Experience, Union with God. He will play his part as a genius in the art of living should, if he interprets the character for which he has been cast, in the full enlightenment of the Vision,

‘The light that never was, on sea or land;  
The consecration, and the Poet’s dream.’

If the timeless continuity of Consciousness cannot be broken by spells of ‘unconsciousness’ or anything else, we can scarcely avoid attributing Consciousness in its full divine meaning to all forms of life, however far removed they may seem from selfhood and the Vision. Consciousness is the essential quality of all life. The identity of subject and object is absolute, since it belongs to the world of the One in which there are no degrees. There are no conceivable stages through which the non-conscious can pass to Consciousness; there are no intermediate states between nothing and something. Those who see in Nature an evolution of Consciousness through endless shades of development, from the inanimate and the lowest forms of life to the highest, are misled by the old confusion between Consciousness and Awareness and between Consciousness and Experience, the object of Awareness.

We say that we are partially ‘conscious’, when we mean that Experience is imperfectly presented to our Awareness. It is the presentation which is at fault, not the faculty. Our power of vision is not to blame when we cannot see something imperfectly lighted. Evolution is at work in the world of the Many and there are endless gradations in the process of gathering, ordering and presentigh Experience, but there is no place for Evolution in the changeless wonel of the One where subject and object are the same. Behaviour is trd only criterion of Consciousness which we can apply outside our own Private Universe. We regard other men as conscious because they behave as if they were. All organisms behave as if they knew they existed. Plants and most animals may not be aware of selfhood; nor for that matter is man during the greater part of his life, for selfhood is rarely presented in the field of his Awareness except on those

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occasions when he is engaged in deep and difficult thinking about his own nature.

It is surprising, not that we are generally unaware of selfhood, but that the image of Consciousness ever breaks through into Experience, for as we have said again and again, it can only appear as a contradiction in terms and it is the nature of mind—organized Experience—to reject such contradictions; its business is with the rational time-space world of the Many. In the lower forms of life, there seems to be a gathering and storing of Experience from the outer world to control action with the main purpose of preserving life in general and the species in particular—it is life's first function to live and multiply—but as the organism becomes more highly developed, information from the One, from within, begins to filter into the world of Experience. From the perfection of the One, come those urgings of the soul of which Pascal says: *'Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.'* Love, beauty, self-sacrifice, values which may seem to run counter to the fundamental law of self-preservation, find their way into a world that knew them not. Ego struggles to introduce into Experience and that third world which mainly conditions it the design and stable perfection of God—a goal never to be attained in the ever-changing world of the Many in which at best no more than a giddy unstable equilibrium can be achieved.

It is strange that those thinkers who are so ready to identify the Absolute with such abstractions as the Good, Beauty, Wisdom, Power, Love, Reason and the like, all of which imply the existence of their opposites and express the relation of the One to the Many, so rarely emphasize that one quality which we are bound to attribute to the Absolute in itself, the very essence of its being, Consciousness. The identity of subject and object implies no deficiency. The Consciousness of the One contains as it were potentially within itself all Goodness, Beauty, Wisdom, Power, Love and Reason, but they can only become actual in relationship to a manifold universe. For apart from the Many, the all-inclusive One has nothing it can know, love or approve except itself. In so far as it is the One, it abides in timelessness far removed from change and action. For perfection reigns within its homogeneous being, perfection, fixed and timeless. Without Consciousness, perfection is death eternal. Reason, love, all values and all goodness are only born in the differentiation of the One through the Many.

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How it is that both the One and the Many can co-exist is a mystery beyond our understanding—like Consciousness it cannot be expressed in terms of Experience—but we ourselves in our dual nature, in Ego and Experience, are the living proof of that co-existence. Like Santa Teresa, we know that it is so, but cannot understand our knowledge. Without the Consciousness of the One, there would be no Awareness and no apprehension of the Many and the Universe would be as if it were not. Without the Experience of the Many, the One would be in an unchanging state of glowing self-contemplation, without values, for there could be no comparison; without love, for there could be no self-sacrifice; without adventure, for there could be no change or doubt; uncreative in a stagnant, timeless universe. As it is, the world of the Many is the One's perpetual creation.

So we shall conclude with Plato in the *Timæus* that life and the universe are the differentiation of the One or God. The One must go out into the Many and be made flesh by the law of his nature, and though in countless incarnations differentiated God becomes countless centres of life, each unit projected into the Many remains in union with the Absolute. Glimpses of 'One-ness' find their way into the world of the Many, as life and time sweep through their never-ending cycles of change. Selfhood, more or less obscurely expressed, finds a place in Experience, and now and then the Vision illumines its meaning with the radiance of the eternal. The Will of God is at work and His Will is ours.

E la sua volontade è nostra pace.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A FANTASY IN TIME

I saw Eternity the other night  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm, as it was bright:  
And round beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years  
Driven by the spheres,  
Like a vast shadow moved; in which the World  
And all her train were hurled.

H. VAUGHAN

Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.

T. S. ELIOT, *Burnt Norton*.

Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

W. BLAKE.

**T**he preceding chapters raise many problems and, it may seem to the reader, insuperable difficulties. The mystery of Sin and Evil, to take one instance out of many, seems to find no place in the design of the universe which has been sketched in outline. Before, however, we approach the obvious objections to our interpretation of the Vision, it will be well to consider for a moment a fundamental issue, the nature of time. Time is forced upon our attention, since it marks an essential distinction between the eternal order of the One and the temporal order of the Many. Its significance, like that of Consciousness, is generally taken for granted as common knowledge and since it, too, is a necessary condition of thought, it eludes definition.

It can scarcely be discussed apart from space, even if it is regarded as the only dimension of Experience, and its analysis involves an incursion into the third world which extends both in time and space, and in which the mystic usually moves with difficulty. He should be at home in the regions of Consciousness and Experience, immaterial



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systems of reality, in which the Mystic Union and its image selfhood reside, and even the most practical follower of the Vision, Santa Teresa for instance, concentrates attention on the values of the inner life rather than on the external world and the constitution of nature which form the province of science.

To the Vision belongs absolute certainty which, as all mystics know, compels belief; in the third world we can hope for no more than the reasonable probability of science. The present study of time aims at no more than imaginative possibility; it will have served its purpose as a fairy story, if it awakens some reader from 'dogmatic slumber' on the subject. As a fantasy, it may gloss over the writer's inadequacy to deal with the problem as a scientist or mathematician should. Whether it approximates to the truth or not, it has been devised to fit into that general frame of reality which corresponds to the author's interpretation of the Vision.

What does the average man of to-day think about time, if he thinks about it at all? Let us examine a small section of it and try to discover its nature. I went a walk this morning with my dog. Time materialized in the shape of a watch I carried in my pocket. From the village lane we crossed a stile into a narrow path between an old elm and a thatched barn. Elm and barn had stood facing one another over that path for centuries like landmarks in the uncharted wilderness of time. With a row of firs protecting a cherry orchard on the left and on the right broad open fields, we followed a cart track to the top of the hill. From there we could look back on the way we had come and see at one glance the various stages of that short journey. The hands of my watch had registered twenty minutes, twelve hundred seconds, since our start.

My eyes assured me that the village lane with the stile, elm and barn, the path and the cart-track, the firs, the cherry orchard and the fields were still there in the outer world as when we passed them. It would have been a staggering blow to expectation, if they had not been. Strictly speaking, no doubt, they were not exactly the same as they had been, for the elements that composed them were in a state of perpetual motion, however motionless they might seem. Each instant there had been some change in them, if only microscopic, but they retained enough of their outer selves to set their identity beyond question.

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There was much on my walk that day to emphasize the law of ceaseless change. There was snow on the ground and a thaw had set in. From the hill-top I could see that a mass of snow had slipped from the thatch of the barn, since I had passed, and here and there grass was appearing where none had been visible. The dog and I had struck across a stretch of virgin snow and our footprints showed where there had been an unbroken white expanse until we had trodden it. A grey horse, standing in the orchard when we reached the cart-track, had moved off to his shed by the time we had reached the top. A hawk that had been hovering over the fields had long since disappeared and the rooks hunting for food had changed their positions again and again.

Time, to judge from these specimen twenty minutes, consists of a series of events or a succession of states and changes. An event is real when it is 'now'; it ceases to be real when it is past and is not yet real when it is in the future. On my walk, if I looked at my watch, I found the real 'now' shown by the position of its hands; if I looked around me, by the actual state of that part of the universe which constituted my environment. But it was impossible for me at any moment to grasp the true 'now', because by the time I was aware of it, it had already moved into the unreality of the past and been replaced by a new position of the watch hands and a new state of my environment. Yet it seemed not impossible to arrest this elusive 'now' and form at my leisure an idea of what it was at the moment when it was real. Suppose I had stopped my watch at some chosen moment, say ten minutes past ten, and taken instantaneous photographs of all the objects surrounding me, I should have a record of the 10.10 a.m. 'now', as related to myself. This record might be taken as a typical example of one of the events which composed those twenty minutes, if I disregarded those microscopic changes which the record itself was undergoing every instant.

In time, pattern succeeded pattern continuously; each instant a new pattern took shape and each instant its place was taken by another. It was as if I had been walking through a series of worlds, each flashing into the other's place and then vanishing. For from the moment we started, the dog and I were moving and changing the things about us, while in their turn those things were continually being changed through circumstances outside our control just as the hands of my watch, which, for the purpose of measurement, I treated as in a closed system, isolated from my environment and geared to the relative

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motions of certain heavenly bodies, moved uniformly and continuously round the dial.

The successive states of the universe which marked time seemed to be composed of the same basic material which was altered only in the order of its arrangement. The watch hands did not change perceptibly in themselves, but only in their relative position. When I examined the past 'now's, which I imagined crystallized by the stopping of the watch or the taking of photographs, I was tempted to compare the universe to a kaleidoscope.

The kaleidoscope, which seems to have gone out of fashion in the modern nursery, consists of a metal cylinder containing pieces of coloured glass which, ingeniously multiplied by mirrors, group themselves in symmetrical patterns. Every time the toy is shaken, the old pattern is broken up, a new pattern is formed, and that pattern might be taken to represent the 'now'. The existing pattern is the only one which is real. The pieces of glass play the part of the solid Lucretian and Victorian atoms, which are still the basis of the average man's conception of matter despite the efforts of modern science to dematerialize them and which remain inexorably themselves, though their arrangement is perpetually changed. This kaleidoscopic theory of time may be taken to express more or less roughly the attitude towards the problem taken instinctively by those who have no occasion to think deeply about it.

Yet it is a profoundly unsatisfactory solution, as St. Augustine pointed out fifteen hundred years ago, and the Greek philosophers before him. It provides for reality the flimsiest of foundations. The present appears as an infinitely thin slice of reality sandwiched between two unrealities, the unrealities of the past and the future. The hands of the stopped watch represent an instant and the photographs must be absolutely instantaneous, for the 'now' must be indivisible, since none of it must be past or future, and therefore without dimension in time. Reality has been whittled away to a tenuous film no more substantial than the fleeting images which herald our dreams on the borderland of sleep.

Again, in itself, each separate state of the universe means absolutely nothing. If we are confronted with one isolated instant, a single position of the watch hands, we cannot possibly judge what preceded it or what will follow it. There is nothing in the 'now' itself, that is

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reality, to tell us anything at all about its past or future. There is nothing in a single state of the universe to indicate whether it has always existed as such, or been preceded by nothing or something, or whether it will last indefinitely as such, or be followed by some different state or nothing at all. We have called time a series of events, but it contains at any given moment only one real term and how can one term compose a series?

The 'now' with which we are familiar is something far more solid than this ghostly abstraction which masquerades as the foundation of matter. The present which we know exists in our Experience and contains elements of the past held together by memory and elements of the future contributed by anticipation. Without memory no idea of time is conceivable. Indeed, as we have said, we can never know the 'now' of the external world as a reality, for apart from the question how it can be said ever to enter really into our Experience, it has already passed and ceased to be real by the time we are aware of it. It may be said that the past we know and call 'now' is so nearly the present that it may be taken as such, but a great gulf is fixed between what is real and what is unreal, and appearance cannot be *really* a half-way house between Being and not-Being. It is not surprising that philosophers have been driven to deny the existence of time in the external world and to confine to the inner world of Experience its being and activity. Thus Kant describes it as 'a purely subjective condition of human perception, and, in itself, as apart from the subject, it is nothing at all.'

One may be theoretically persuaded that time is 'a purely subjective condition of human perception', but it is human nature to search for some objective significance in a conception which is so terribly real to us. Some fifty years ago H. G. Wells wrote his famous story, *The Time Machine*, in which he treated time as a fourth dimension and conceived a vehicle to carry his hero through it as a train might carry him through the space we know. He imagined the universe stretched out in time just as it is in space with past, present and future, all co-existent in an eternal 'now', though owing to the limitations of our senses we are only able to perceive that section of the whole which we call the present.

If only we knew it, the past continues to exist after we have left it behind us, just as the road over which we have travelled has not

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vanished and turned into nothing, because we can see it no longer. The future is already in existence before we come to it, just as the town to which we are driving is a reality before we reach it. When Mr. Wells was writing this story, science had begun to find a larger place for time in its inquiries and was approaching that conception of a time-space continuum, which sounds as if it confirmed his fantasy, though nowadays, when it has become a commonplace, the mathematicians who use it are careful to explain that it is only a convenient fiction.

In the years between the Wars a similar theory, elaborated by J. M. Dunne in *An Experiment with Time*, enjoyed considerable popularity and even appeared in rather garbled disguise on the stage, though it attracted little recognition from serious mathematicians. A practical engineer with an instinctive horror of the irrational, he had been seriously perturbed by a series of prophetic dreams which were confirmed by future events in such accuracy of detail as, in his opinion, to rule out the possibility of coincidence or lucky guesswork. He would almost as soon have had visions from the Devil as dreams of precognition from some abnormal or supernatural faculty, and he set to work to rationalize these unwelcome visitations. He argued that if he could foresee a future event which he could not possibly anticipate by the light of reason or experience, that event, in some sense, must already be in existence at the moment when it came into his dream. The identification of time with a fourth dimension of space seemed to offer a way out of his difficulty by providing the future with a lodging which, though inaccessible to the waking senses, might be accessible in sleep.

He conceives the conscious subject as an observer whose field of observation or Awareness is travelling through a fourth dimension which is time. We are, as it were, being carried through a dark tunnel which we may imagine as papered with advertisement posters to represent the variety of events. A slit in the blackout of our carriage windows allows a beam of light from inside to illuminate the posters momentarily as we come level with them, and these posters, which are the only posters in our field of observation, we regard as present events. The posters farther on which the train will pass later are hidden in the darkness of the tunnel, but they are already there, and if we could climb on the engine and switch on a headlight, we might catch a glimpse of one or two of them, while they are still ahead of us in the future

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and before they become level with us and therefore present. Somewhat in this manner Mr. Dunne endeavours to lift his experiences of precognition from the confusion of mystical irrationality, where less practical spirits would have left them, to the order and clarity of scientific reason. More will be said in a later chapter of precognition and that obscure and not very edifying department of Experience usually called the supernatural; for the moment we are concerned only with the spatial conception of time.

A difficulty arises. When we have identified time with a space dimension, we have by no means disposed of it. A dimension in modern mathematics is merely a distinct way of measuring an object. It is not confined to space dimensions, and momentum, mass multiplied by velocity, is regarded as two-dimensional, mass and velocity being its dimensions, as they are two distinct ways in which a moving object can be measured. In this sense time is certainly a dimension, for all things in the physical world are measurable in time. When, however, time is defined as the *fourth* dimension, it is implied that it is a space dimension, length, breadth and depth being the three others, and this definition predicates of time something more than the general mathematical sense of the word 'dimension'. A space dimension, besides being a distinct way of measuring an object, implies the possibility of motion in a certain direction, and it may be well to consider how far popular language accurately represents the truth when it speaks of length of time or travelling through time—phrases which identify time with space.

It is self-evident that all motion in space takes time. It does not matter whether we are going up or down, east or west, north or south; a journey in all or any of the three space dimensions must take time. If there is a fourth dimension of space, motion through it must take time and that time cannot be measured in the fourth dimension nor can it be that dimension; for when we say that motion takes time, we mean that it can be measured in time as well as space. If we travel a mile along the fourth space dimension at sixty miles an hour, we must look outside that dimension for our time measurement, for the minute which our journey has taken. We try to identify time with a fourth space dimension, but that dimension obstinately remains space and time still eludes us. Consequently there must be something wrong with the identification of time with space.

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In a series of persuasive diagrams, Mr. Dunne proves that if time is treated as space, it ceases to be time and becomes space, as was to be expected. He gives, what is to my mind, a conclusive demonstration that time cannot be identified with any space dimension at all and that there must be some fundamental distinction between time and space. He is, however, so wedded to this identification that as soon as time has disappeared from the fourth dimension, he assumes its presence in a fifth dimension, only to find that the fifth dimension turns into space, time slipping away into a hypothetical sixth dimension and so on for ever. So, because he will not recognize the impossibility of identifying time and space, he reduces reality to an infinite series, to that Infinite Regress, which Bradley declared reality could not be.

At this point I venture on my own humble hypothesis. It is probably not new—there is a hint of it in Plato's *Timæus*—but I do not know where it has been set out before, and it has the advantage of supplying me with a fairy story which, even if wiser men scorn it, fits nicely into my interpretation of the Vision, though it is by no means essential to it.

What is the outstanding difference between our conceptions of time and space? Time, we have said, is a succession of states and changes implying alteration and motion; space, on the other hand, is static; it is mere extension without motion. Our measurement of time depends on motion, whether it is that of the heavenly bodies or the swing of a pendulum or the rotation of hands round the dial, but we can measure space by rod and tape. There is a certain path on the earth's surface which I call my favourite walk. I can describe it either as a three miles' walk or an hour's walk. At first sight I seem to identify the path and the walk, the distance and the time, but a moment's thought shows that I cannot do so. I cannot call it an hour's path. In the word 'path' there is no implication of motion, only extension in space. It is and remains a space length of three miles, but it is not an hour long, until something moves over it with a given velocity. Then by virtue of the introduction of motion, it can be measured in time as well as in space.

After noting motion as a fundamental distinction between time and space as we ordinarily conceive them, let us hark back to the origin of Mr. Dunne's speculations and consider more fully the hypothesis of a fourth space dimension without identifying it with time. Some years before Wells wrote *The Time Machine*, it made its first popular appear-

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ance in a monograph by C. H. Hinton with the title *What is the Fourth Dimension?* which may well have inspired the romance as well as *An Experiment with Time*, though its author was concerned with a theory of motion rather than a theory of time.

The idea of a fourth dimension, a familiar plaything to the mathematician who has means of dealing with any number of dimensions whether real or fictitious, is apt to shock the preconceived notions of the average man, because he can find no room for it in the space he knows. Length, breadth and depth are with us always as properties of material objects, and these three dimensions we have to measure at right angles to one another. Not more than three straight lines can be drawn through any one point at right angles to one another in space as we know it, and we cannot imagine how a fourth could possibly be drawn through the same point at right angles to the other three.

If two straight lines are drawn on this sheet of paper, to cross one another at right angles, their point of intersection can be pierced by a pin at right angles to them both, but there is no space that we can find to contain a fourth line at right angles to all three. Yet such a line must be possible, if space possesses a fourth dimension. Perhaps we are hurrying so fast through this dimension, and are so engrossed in our journey, that we are only aware of the point which we have reached and cannot catch a glimpse of what lies behind us and what awaits us.

Hinton argued that his hypothesis of a fourth dimension would allow him to introduce into the order of the universe one of those simplifications which it is the business of science to discover. It is a simplification of an amazing kind, so amazing that his work has been forgotten, for it aims at nothing less than the reduction of all the various motions observed in the universe to the single uniform motion of an observer's field through a stationary physical world. We are three-dimensional observers with a three-dimensional field so that we can observe objects in breadth, length and depth, and as a first step towards grasping what Hinton means by a fourth dimension, we must consider an imaginary two-dimensional observer with a two-dimensional field, capable of observing breadth and length but not depth. He will see the world as we should see it in the cinema, if we did not ourselves supply a third dimension to the two-dimensional flatness of the photographs. We will suppose this two-dimensional observer to be situated in the third dimension with which we are familiar, though he knows nothing of it,



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in a manner analogous to our situation in a hypothetical fourth dimension.

Take a stick of the cylindrical sweetmeat known as Rock, qualified by some such place name as London. The peculiarity which commends it to us is that the letters forming LONDON ROCK in coloured sugar run miraculously through the length of the cylinder. Wherever the bar may be cut at right angles, the cross-section observed in one direction bears the mystic legend LONDON ROCK and in the reverse direction the same words as if they were reflected in a mirror. Let us suppose for our purpose that these letters are outlined by coloured sugar in dots. Every one of these dots as they appear to the observer after cutting across the stick, is the cross-section of a straight thread of sugar running through the length of the cylinder parallel to its diameter. If the reader doubts it, let him split his stick of Rock lengthwise.

Suppose that our two-dimensional observer can pass through the length of the cylinder as though it were a tunnel, without deforming its contents, so that cross-section after cross-section, and nothing else, is presented in his field of Awareness. As he and his field have *ex hypothesi* no extension in the third dimension, their powers of penetration exceed those of the most penetrating rays or unsubstantial ghosts. His outlook is confined to the contents of his field and he can be aware of nothing that lies outside it. The world, as he perceives it, has length and breadth but no thickness, and there is nothing within the limits of his observation to suggest that a third dimension can or does exist. Consequently, he is highly unlikely to guess that he is travelling through that dimension, and he will suppose that the LONDON ROCK he sees, and continues to see, is precisely the same LONDON ROCK that he saw to begin with. In fact, there is nothing in his world to indicate to him, until he comes to the end of the cylinder, that he and that world are not relatively at rest.

Suppose again that a particularly cunning sweet-maker, instead of running his coloured sugar in straight lines through the cylinder, moulded it in tortuous threads. Say that he so arranged them that the first cross-section of the bar bore the legend LONDON ROCK and that inside the cylinder they turned and twisted until at last they formed a new slogan—OUR ROCK IS BEST, perhaps. Our observer's field, a plane cutting the cylinder at right angles, travels through it as before. His Awareness is still confined to the contents of that field, but he will

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now be aware of motion in it. He will perceive, as each cross-section is presented to him, a gradually changing pattern formed of what would seem to him to be moving dots. The dots that originally made up LONDON ROCK will appear to be displaced and to dance about, until by degrees they shape the new slogan. Each dot would seem to move of its own motion, as the threads of sugar deviated from the straight line, and if the observer had a measure in the field, he could measure the extent of their displacement. The sugar dots in fine, though themselves stationary, would behave exactly as material particles are observed to behave in our external world.

It is clear that to the two-dimensional observer in the stick of rock, the events presented in sequence to his Awareness would appear to be as short-lived and evanescent as patterns in a kaleidoscope. Each cross-section as it flashed up would be real to him for an instant and then perish; he would regard the cross-sections to come as non-existent until he reached them. Never would he suspect that the stick of Rock would continue to exist in the third dimension with all its patterns and cross-sections, after his field had passed through its length, nor that the only motion in the whole system was his own.

Let us now return to a three-dimensional observer such as we are in a four-dimensional universe. For him as for the two-dimensional observer in the three-dimensional world, lines will appear as points, plane figures as lines, and solid figures as planes, in the cross-sections of the universe through which he travels. Every particle will have a world line imperceptible to him in the fourth dimension. In addition the solid figures he observes are cross-sections of four-dimensional figures, the description of which must be left to the mathematician. The simplest of them is elaborately described by Hinton in a later work, *The Fourth Dimension*, the tesseract, which is the four-dimensional figure of which the cube is a cross-section.

In this four-dimensional world, all the countless motions that can be observed, that is all change in the physical universe, can be reduced to the single motion of a field of observation through a world composed of stationary crooked lines which are presented to the three-dimensional observer in cross-section as moving points or particles. At any given moment, the observer is aware of a number of particles which seem to move in all directions, as time carries him from one cross-section to another, though in truth they are at rest and he alone is moving.

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Professor Broad gives the following formal summary of Hinton's suggestion in his criticism of the Dunne theory (*Philosophy*, April 1935):

'This one *uniform rectilinear* motion of the *observer's field of observation*, together with the purely *geometrical properties* of the *stationary material threads* in the four-fold (i.e. four-dimensional system) will account for the *various observed motions* (various in magnitude and direction) of the material *particles* which are the appearances of these threads in the successive fields of observation.' (The italics are the Professor's.)

The motion of the observer's field of observation I propose to identify with time. Availing ourselves of Hinton's hypothesis, we will suppose that Ego's field of observation or Awareness is travelling in the fourth dimension through a stationary universe and all the apparent motions which he observes in the physical world are due to the motion of that field. All the past of that universe continues to exist as it were behind him, after his Awareness has been carried past it, and all the future already exists in front of him, before he has become aware of it. The sequence of cause and effect as he observes it arises from the orderly pattern of that world which is so arranged that certain events regularly succeed other events in the direction followed by his field of observation. He believes that he can interfere in the outer world and alter its configuration. In fact his interference is limited to changing the course which his field of Awareness is pursuing so that in his future another series of events may be presented to him in place of those which were awaiting him. Time carries the fields of Awareness of all living beings in the general sweep of the universal 'now', but each Ego has a restricted power of modifying the course of his field and each individual swerve affects the course of the universal 'now'. The light of Awareness illuminating the motionless space world of matter links the order of the One with the order of the Many and their contact in the motion of time creates another world of the Many, the temporal world of Experience.

It is one thing to identify time with a space dimension and a very different thing to define it as motion through that dimension. We are being hurried through space by time like a sailing-ship before the wind, and the wind that fills our sails is not the same as the ocean over which we are sailing. There is a difference between the hour spent on a journey from London to Brighton and the fifty-odd miles of railway track

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between the towns. The Derby is not identical with the Epsom race-course. Time sometimes flies; space never.

We must look again and more closely at our general conception of time. It will be found to be a hybrid combination of two incongruous ideas, space and motion. We think of time as space when we speak of travelling through it and as motion when we say that it flies. If time is space, we have seen that it vanishes in an Infinite Regress and with it all reality. If we identify it with motion, we can deal at once with the proposition, 'motion through time takes time', the foundation of the Infinite Regress and Mr. Dunne's Serialism. 'Motion through motion takes motion' leads nowhere, not even to a series without an ultimate term.

Let us suppose for a moment that by a miracle all motion in the universe has been arrested. Presumably something of the kind will happen, when Sir James Jeans's universe comes to its final end with all substance 'annihilated' and converted into changeless heat-energy. In the four-dimensional universe of our hypothesis, all motion would come to an end, if a field of observation common to all observers moving through the fourth dimension came to a standstill. What then would happen to time in a motionless universe?

If we are right in identifying time with motion, it should vanish. There could be no succession of those states and changes which we associate with it, for all change has ceased. Instead of time we have pure duration, the repetition of a universal identical event, if such a phrase can have any meaning. The very word 'repetition' implies the motion which we have banished from the world. Duration, the dictionaries tell us, is a synonym of time and it has been most unfortunately chosen as a translation of Bergson's *durée* with which it has nothing in common. Its proper meaning is the very opposite, timelessness; for changeless duration in the Many would correspond with changeless eternity in the One. 'The Father of All,' writes Plato in the *Timæus*, 'bethought him to make a moving image of eternity; and while he was ordering the universe he made of eternity that abides in unity an eternal image moving according to number, even that which we have named time.'

Suppose that by a second miracle the universe sprang into life again and the field of Awareness resumed its course. How long would that universal paralysis have lasted? It would be equally true to say that it had endured a single instant or the ten million million years at which

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astronomy computes the past existence of the stars with an extra million million years thrown in for the future of life on earth. There is no conceivable way in which that interval could be measured or given temporal significance. 'For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.' Suppress motion and time vanishes. Duration without change is not time but timelessness.

The problem of time is complicated by the general agreement that time as we know it is not always the time indicated by clocks and calendars and common to all our neighbours. Clock-time or public time is the time of which we have been speaking and which we have imagined as the motion of a field of observation common to all observers travelling through a stationary universe. It is measurable as the contents of that universe are arranged not at haphazard, but in such order that, as we have learnt from experience, we can count on the regular repetition of certain coincidences or events. These events we abstract and as it were isolate from the complex stream of Experience through which we observe them, to serve as units of time measurement.

Sometimes we accuse this clock-time of going fast or slow. We do not mean that there has been any slowing or acceleration in the recurrence of the events by which we measure time. The swing of the pendulum has not been accelerated nor has there been a repetition of Joshua's miracle. We mean that over and above clock-time we have an inner or private time of our own. As a rule the two times coincide, but sometimes one seems to outstrip or lag behind the other.

Before considering these two times, both of which may be called psychological, since their existence depends on their relation to life and Experience, it may be well to remark that mathematicians rejoice in a time or times of their own. Mathematical time need not detain us and we can safely leave it to those who understand it, since we have it on the authority of Professor Einstein that it has no relationship to psychological time.

'Time', says Rosalind in *As You Like It*, 'travels in divers paces with divers persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal and who he stands still withal.' Clock-time, as we all know, seems to move at different speeds for different persons in different conditions, when they measure it by the standard of their private time.

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Bergson denies the reality of both mathematical and public time. Time thought, he says, is only a human convention, time lived the only reality. His 'élan vital' might well describe the sweep of Consciousness and Awareness through the objective universe, but he has eliminated Consciousness in our sense of the word and has no observer, only Experience which unaccountably observes itself. His real time is *durée*, that is Experience which preserves in itself the past by virtue of memory and which creates from every 'now' a new and unpredictable future. The distinction between static duration and creative *durée* is clear.

In our fantasy of time, we make the One the creator of real time by the sweep of his Awareness through the physical universe and that time is shared by every unit of the differentiated One, every Ego. Private time which corresponds with Bergson's *durée*, though we cannot attribute to it the creative power which belongs to the One and Ego, comes into Experience as a shadow or ghost of clock-time. Its measurement is uncertain and capricious, because its only units of measurement are memories. The ticking of the clock, the striking of the hours, the days of the week, the weeks, months and years come to us as new Experience from the outer world for the measurement of clock-time, but our past Experience—our memories—is not divided into units like a yard measure by our memories of clocks and calendars. It is impossible to divide into instants, into temporal slices, units of Experience the parts of which are not exterior to one another, but interpenetrated and intercomposed, with past inseparable from present and anticipated future. A pain or purpose carries with it into the present both its past and anticipated future. 'It is not composed of instants threaded together like beads on a string. Its instants differ in quality; they are heterogeneous; they interpenetrate like the notes of a melody.' (Dr. Luce on *durée* in *Bergson's Doctrine of Intuition*.)

To isolate an instant of Experience is as impossible as to take a cross-section of a cloud of mingled gases with a chopper. Moreover the Experience of life is perpetually changing and never repeats itself. As each complex event in itself is unique, there can be none of that recurrence which is essential to the measurement of time. We think that Experience can be temporarily measured, when we abstract from it arbitrarily some new element from the outer world which corresponds with our motion through the universe. The ticking of the clock may be heard when we are bored, when we are happy, when we are miser-

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able, and we imagine that our boredom, happiness or misery are being measured by the swing of the pendulum, but when we cease to hear the ticking, the stream of Experience passes into that private time in which there are no perceptible intervals or instants at all.

Yet we do try to measure this private time after a fashion, since we so often compare its progress with that of clock-time. Ego forms a rough estimate of the amount of Experience which normally passes through his field of Awareness in a given length of clock-time. He can only calculate by the arbitrary units such as feelings and thoughts which with the aid of words he has tried to carve out of its fluidity to form definite memories. If looking back and recollecting his Experience, he can gather a larger crowd of memories than he expects, he will say that time has gone slowly and vice versa. The process is necessarily vague and tentative and we must beware of laying down hard and fast rules for its activity. Mr. Shandy wondered how two hours and ten minutes could seem almost an age. "Tis owing entirely", quoth my Uncle Toby, 'to the succession of our ideas.'

Ego in himself is timeless and in the Mystic Union he escapes utterly from the tyranny of time. Santa Teresa speculates with some bewilderment on the time spent in her communion with God, but in truth the Mystic Union is outside time. It lasts no longer for that abbot who was ravished into ecstasy by a lark's song and came back to find the world three hundred years older than when it slips, as a timeless moment, into the interval between two demi-semi-quavers. |

I have read that when a certain anaesthetic is administered to a patient, he may be told to count up to twenty. When he reaches a certain number, say twelve, he will go off into insensibility and may remain in that condition for an hour or more while an operation is being performed. As soon as he comes to, he will say 'thirteen', continuing to count where he left off, and will have no idea that there was a longer interval between twelve and thirteen than between any of the other numbers. His escape from both public and private times has been complete.

It will be agreed, I think, that no one is concerned with his private time except when he is in contact with the external world of clocks and public time. When we accuse time of going fast or slow, we must have some idea of what public time is actually doing, and we must distinguish between two different points of view. Sometimes the accusa-

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tion is concerned with the immediate present in which we are living; sometimes it refers back to the past as seen in retrospect. I remember that my first terms at school seemed to me interminable; time seemed to be standing still. Now when I look back, those terms and the whole of my school-time seem to have passed in the twinkling of an eye. In the living, my early schooldays brought countless new experiences—for the most part unpleasant—which at the time stood out as jagged memories like the cogs of a watch wheel, and though I have forgotten them, their general impression remains. They have been absorbed and remoulded with later Experience into thoughts and feelings in which I cannot recognize them, though the image of my despair at the misbehaviour of time is still clear in my recollection. When I look back over my life at school as a whole, the memories of all those years that I can muster at any given moment would scarcely require a single day for their enactment.

Time seems very long in the living when we are thinking of it. Hazlitt says of the ticking of a clock in the night: 'Time is rendered vast by contemplating its minute portions, thus repeatedly and painfully urged upon the attention, as the ocean in its immensity is composed of water-drops.' The ticking of the clock provides us with a multitude of distinct time units and time moves slowly as we enumerate them. Impatience and boredom make time move with a heavy foot, for countless little pricks of resentment take the place of the monotonous tick-tack. When we are unhappy or in pain we rivet our attention to the conditions imposed upon us against our will. The perpetual clash between what we want and what is fills the intervals of time with the saw teeth of disappointment or pain. It is only if we can withdraw attention from them that time resumes the even swiftness of its flow, as an experiment at the dentist's will demonstrate. When the thirsty tea-lover watches the kettle, it takes an unconscionable time to boil, because his eyes are fixed on every puff of steam that comes from its spout.

Time is of vital importance to the organism which links Ego to the external world as measuring the span of its growth and life and it possesses an accurate clock of its own, based presumably on the recurrence of its physical changes, though Ego only rarely consults it. It is to this clock that Mr. Macneile Dixon refers in *The Human Situation*.

'We know that under hypnosis a suggestion made to a subject that



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he will do something, write a letter, or go out for a walk, after the lapse of say 11,470 minutes, or 850 minutes, will be fulfilled with surprising accuracy. The subject can give no account of the manner in which he performs the necessary calculation, and is indeed quite unaware that any suggestion . . . has been made to him. The extraordinary precision of the correspondence between the inner time determination and external time is in these cases undisputed and unexplained.'

The writer is no exception in being able to set an internal alarm clock, when he goes to sleep, with the certainty of waking at the appointed moment of clock-time. When Ego gives an order to his mind and abstains from confusing intervention, it will carry out its instructions to the best of its mechanical ability and the results are often surprising.

The further Ego removes himself from his timelessness, the more closely he identifies himself with his Experience or phenomenal self, the more slowly will time move for him. Time seems to move so slowly in youth when Ego's attention is fascinated by the novelty and variety of the experience which is pouring in on him from a brave new world. In *Anima Poetæ* under the title of *Time Real and Imaginary*, Coleridge illustrates the contrast between the old and the young in their sense of time with one of his subtle similes which really does not deserve the editor's comment that it is 'a riddle hard to read'.

'How marked the contrast between troubled manhood, and joyously-active youth in the sense of time; in the former, time like the sun in an empty sky is never seen to move, but only to have *moved*. There, there it was, and now 'tis here, now distant! Yet all a blank between. To the latter it is as the full moon in a fine breezy October night, driving on amid clouds of all shapes and hues, and kindling shifting colours, like an ostrich in its speed, and yet seems not to have moved at all.'

In youth, time goes slowly, because its intervals are filled with countless new events, with Coleridge's glorious clouds which have nothing at all to do with Wordsworth's 'clouds of glory', and in age it flies, because they are mere blanks of memory void of the miracles of novelty.

Nothing can prolong misery more effectively than that complete identification of Ego with his sufferings which takes the form of self-pity. The mind examines and analyses—gloats over—its conglomerate emotions, doubling them by the fear of anticipation and presenting in

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the most concrete form of symbolism it can command each phase of the trouble in a multitude of complaints far more frequent and harrying than the fastest tick-tack of an aggressive metronome.

It seems generally agreed that time travels slowly when we are young, unhappy, bored, anticipating something pleasurable and when life is full of change and variety. With the contradictoriness of nature, it usually drags when we particularly want it to hurry, but there are exceptions to this rule. A holiday abroad with complete novelty and constant change of scene lasts longer in the living than one spent at home. The new adventure appears as a crowd of memorable events squeezed into the compass of a few days or weeks. Nothing makes time pass more quickly than routine, for Ego if he summons up his memories can muster nothing more than a dull repetition, a single uniform monotony.

When we are interested in anything, time is the last thing we think of and when we are reminded of it find that it has passed far quicker than we should have expected. It means as a rule that there has been a harmony between Ego and external things and harmony becomes a continuous state of satisfaction in which we do not attempt to count the moments. We have no wish to crystallize its fluidity into definite thoughts or words and the whole of our interest seems to have been concentrated on a single event. When we are absorbed in reading, we enter into direct communication with the author's mind and time does not intervene until the book is finished. Time takes wings for the lover in the company of the beloved, for love and Mystic Union are one.

Much more might be said about the vagaries of private time. There are thinkers who hold that the synchronization of public and private time is in Mr. Macneile Dixon's words, 'The question above all others, of first and crucial importance', and they may be right, but it is not a matter of primary concern to the mystic who looks at time from the viewpoint of the timeless. Those who wish to live longer lives by the measurement of inner time must learn the art of living and discover the secret of seeing in every event however stale and familiar something new and miraculous, worthy of recollection.

Let us now return to that myth of public time with which our fancy was playing. As we are now fully embarked on our fairy story we may venture to carry our speculations a step or two farther into the fantastic, borrowing a suggestion from Mr. Dunne. We have agreed to assume

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that time is our motion through a fourth dimension, though our senses provide us with no evidence as to the existence of this dimension. Our curious predicament of ignorance in this matter might perhaps be accounted for by a further assumption that we are travelling with the velocity of light in this inaccessible direction. Scientists are for the present generally agreed that the velocity of light, 300,000 kilometres or 186,000 miles per second, is the limiting velocity of our universe; no higher velocity is possible therein and nothing can overtake or outstrip light, nor can anything used as a signal travel at a higher speed.

The results of the Michélsion-Morley experiment have become a commonplace. If a train going at forty miles an hour is overtaken by another travelling at fifty miles an hour on a parallel track, the second train will pass the first at a relative speed of ten miles an hour. If the trains are moving in opposite directions, they will pass another with the relative speed of ninety miles an hour. If, however, a ray of light meets or overtakes us, it passes us with the same velocity, 186,000 miles per second, whether we are moving towards it or away from it.

So if time is carrying us through the fourth dimension with the speed of light, we are travelling as fast as it is possible to travel in our universe, and every object we pass in the fourth dimension must instantly vanish from our ken; for any signal that might inform us of its continued existence would have to travel faster than light to overtake us and that is impossible. If an observer was borne from the sun in a beam of light, the sun would cease to exist for him as soon as he left it, for nothing at all emanating from it after his departure could catch him up. If he had a measuring rod with him and tried to thrust it out backwards in the direction from which he had come to measure a distance he had traversed, every particle of it behind him would be lost to him; for no sign of any one of them could reach him without outstripping light. Similarly he could not push his measure forward in front of him, for that would only be possible, if he could make it move with a velocity greater than his own that is faster than light. So long as he was moving in this direction at this speed, he would be deprived of all possibility of motion in the direction in which he was travelling, he could have no idea that any such direction or dimension existed and no reason to suppose that he was moving at all.

If we travel fast enough past them, the broad gaps between up-ended sleepers forming a fence will disappear and the whole length of fence

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will seem of solid wood. If we are speeding through 186,000 miles of space in a second, it is not surprising that what the scientist now calls 'a gossamer universe' seems to us in parts very tightly packed. 'A few wasps flying around in Waterloo station will represent the extent to which the atom is crowded with electrons—all the rest is emptiness.' So Sir James Jeans. In the merest fraction of a second we shall have journeyed far enough to come into contact with many apparently closely packed swarms of wasps, though in truth they may be widely separated, flying around in the dreary emptiness of countless Waterloo stations.

Such a theory of time exercises a pleasantly shrinking effect on the immensities of the astronomers; for all magnitude is relative. 'Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie,' wrote Pascal with a shudder, but if it was the immensity that troubled him, he might have found consolation in the thought that man may be rushing through the fourth dimension with the speed of light. The man who in one direction can be measured in units of light years, each of them five to six million million miles, may feel cramped in the narrow limits of the Solar System, but he will find room to stretch in the galactic spaces of the Milky Way.

The hypothesis of a fourth dimension brings our notions of time up to date, if that is in any way desirable; the cinematograph takes the place of the kaleidoscope. The past continues to exist and the future is already in existence, when our senses are aware of nothing but the present, just as the earlier pictures of the film are still there after they have been shown, and the later pictures await their turn. The difficulty was to discover where the past and future of life could be stored. The spectator at the cinema sees only one section of the film at a time, but he has no doubt that the whole length of celluloid exists rolled up in three-dimensional space and within possible reach of his senses.

The fourth dimension provides a storing place, at least within the range of mathematical speculation, for the whole film of life, which is shown only one 'now' at a time to the Ego who lives it. It gives St. Augustine that 'secret place' for which he looked in vain in the inmost recesses of his soul, to hold the past and the future. 'If times past and to come be, I would know where they be. Which yet if I cannot, yet I know wherever they be, they are not there as future or past, but present. For if there also they be future, they are not yet there; and if there also they be past, they are no longer there.'

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Hinton's principle of a single uniform motion in four-dimensional space is illustrated by the cinematograph in a three-dimensional world. A number of still pictures are virtually superimposed on one another by being thrown in quick succession on the same screen and so presented to the spectator in an identical part of his field of vision. If the cinema 'stills' were actually superimposed upon one another like cards in a pack instead of being extended side by side along the film, each point in the photographs would for practical purposes be the cross-section of a straight or tortuous line running through the pack just as the sugar dots of our LONDON ROCK ran through the stick in lines, the apparent displacements of these points depending on the irregularity of the lines and the uniform motion of the film before the light of the projector. The cinema reproduces motion by a film in motion and a light at rest; the effect would be the same if practical conditions allowed the film to be at rest and the light in motion. It is a matter of indifference whether we regard the observer's field as in motion and the universe at rest or vice versa.

Some readers may remember the little books of photographs which were popular in the early days of the cinema. The thumb pressing on the loose edges of the leaves would turn them over in such quick succession that the sequence of pictures, taken of a moving object at short intervals of time, ran into one another and seemed to make a single picture with all movement transferred to the objects shown. So we arrive at a cinematic theory of time. The patterns of the kaleidoscope become as permanent as their component pieces of glass.

It will be observed that the physical universe we have imagined is of unspeakable vastness and complexity. I do not think, however, that this immensity can be urged as an argument against its imaginative possibility. In our allegory, we might describe it as the dream of God, the One dreaming the Many, and we can set no limits either to the Dreamer or the dream. It contains in its four dimensions, not only everything that has been in the past, but also everything that might have been; not only everything that will be in the future, but everything that might be.

Returning to our two-dimensional observer in his cylinder of London Rock, the sweetmeat must assume unlimited proportions and the threads of coloured sugar form a system of infinite complexity. These twisting threads must continually branch and fork to form the

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complex pattern of the world as we perceive it, and Ego's field of Awareness does not always pursue the rectilinear uniform motion of Hinton's hypothesis. There are occasions when the pattern allows him to change the direction which his field is following and thereby alter the series of events which time has in store for him. It is to-day generally agreed that Ego's opportunities of exercising his power of choice and interfering in the physical world are more restricted than he thinks. His initiative is more limited than he is usually prepared to admit. Yet sometimes two or more ways lie open before him and he can so far control the course of his field of Awareness in time as to select one of them and leave the other possibilities behind him in the 'might-have-been'. The deflection of any individual field affects the course of adjacent fields and so influences the direction of the universal 'now', which consists of their totality.

Ego is Captain of the ship of the Self, but, sailing in the strange waters of the Many, he must follow the advice and set his course by the directions of his Pilot, Experience, which forms his mind, temperament, personality, character, his subordinate officer, the objective self. Beyond this Free Will cannot go.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EXPERIENCE AND MIND

The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath  
And Harmony of music. There is a dark  
Invisible workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, and makes them move  
In one society.—WORDSWORTH, *The Prelude*.

If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.—BLAKE.

Philosophers have questioned the existence of the external world and their doubts cannot be logically disposed of. As Professor Watson says in *An Outline of Philosophy*, 'our ideas of external reality, self-consistent though they be, may only possess the self-consistency of a well-ordered dream. For if there is a God, He may purposely produce in us the illusion of extended reality; and if there is no God, the apparent reality of external things may be due to a defect in ourselves.' On the other hand, the reality of Experience, when we are experiencing it, lies beyond question like that of Consciousness. All Experience is real when we are aware of it, because we are aware of it; we have no other criterion of its reality. The pink elephants of delirium tremens are real to the dipsomaniac, though there are no pink elephants in the Zoo. A dream that we recognize as a dream is as real as our certainty that it is a dream. Our knowledge of Experience is absolute and complete, however tenuous and unsubstantial that Experience may be. Strangely enough, however, though Experience comes into existence solely as the object of Ego's Awareness, it does not cease to exist when he ceases to be aware of it. The mode of its existence in the secret repository of the Under-Mind is concealed from us and we can only affirm its reality in so far as it is re-presented to Awareness.

It is only this world of Experience which gives meaning and value

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to the external world, whatever its constitution may be. Experience is the purpose of the universe. Bergson insists that action is the essential goal of life, but action has no significance apart from Experience, which is born from the clash between the One and the Many. If, as we have imagined, the external world is stationary and changeless, there can be neither change nor development, the essential conditions of the differentiation of the One, except in Experience which arises from the motion of a universal field of Awareness or time. Apart from life, the configuration of the physical world matters not at all. In the world of the Many, Experience is paramount and all-important.

Experience must be considered under two different aspects. From one point of view, it consists almost entirely of memories. Though in waking life there is a continuous inflow of new perceptions distinguished from past experience by a vividness that calls imperiously for Ego's attention, they are in a flash converted into memories. From another point of view, it must be identified with mind in the widest sense of the word, the machine built up out of past Experience and operated by Ego to shape Experience both new and old for his instruction and to direct all his activities. Mind is perpetually shaping itself out of the material which it is shaping and taking into itself.

The new Experience, entering the Self through the senses, directly links Ego with his environment. In the last chapter we treated our inquiry into time as though it involved an incursion into the external world. Our fairy story played with a stationary universe, the velocity of light and so on, as though it was possible for us to enter into their reality, whereas, in point of fact, not one of us can escape except in Mystic Union from the circle of our Experience. We can discover no more about the material world outside the Self than our senses can perceive and Science has nothing to work on except the information they provide—apart from that revelation from within which Science abjures.

Most of us are convinced that, proof or no proof, a manifold universe does exist outside ourselves, that we act on it and it reacts on us, and the safest course seems to lie in assuming that this general conviction is founded on truth. The student of the Vision, however, is not seriously concerned with the possible composition of this third world, whether the modern scientist is right with his emptiness and electric charges, or whether eventually there may be a return to the theory



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of hard little shot-like atoms, or whether some brand-new hypothesis may hold the field. He will be content if he can fit an undefined substratum for Experience into the framework of reality supplied by his interpretation of the Vision. No doubt, if it came to a world-wide counting of heads, the East would sweep the polls with a vast majority in favour of denial of the Many, physical world and Experience combined, as mere illusion—Maya—, though in the West millions still cling to the deceptive solidity of matter as the only conceivable reality. The Western mystic may be wise to hold the balance between these two extremes.

Whatever view we may take of the external world, we find on reflection that each 'now' of the moving picture of life is produced in the studio of Experience within the Self and projected on the screen of the outer world. That screen, however, seems to be no blank neutral sheet such as the cinema uses. Indeed, all the scenes of our picture were shot from it and the configuration of its background is unlikely to coincide exactly with the lines of the photograph thrown upon it, though they should approximate to it. How far the picture accurately reproduces the model, how much it blurs, adds or omits, must remain an insoluble enigma. Certainly, if modern science is right, it is very far from portraying things as they really are. It may be such a portrait as delighted the heart of the cubist, but it is not a perfect likeness.

In our inquiry into time, we selected as the typical 'now' a visual presentation of the outer world. Sight was the only sense that contributed anything to the analysis of my country walk. This aspect of the world was singled out as the typical ever-changing event which marks the motion of time, because it is the most definite, the most vivid, and, in a sense, the most permanent combination of immediate Experience presented to Ego in daily life. It was instinctively identified with the 'now', because we could build on it a series of coherent and clear-cut states that were comparable, measurable and intelligible; we were able to see it as a pattern of the kaleidoscope or a cinema photograph in perfect focus.

Sight is a privileged sense and we attach a special reality to what we see. 'Seeing is believing' is no idle proverb. Mind, the machine of organized experience, has been designed to transform the visual sense data into a vivid panorama with the least possible delay and to give them precedence in ordinary circumstances over information provided

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by the other senses. Life may depend on the speed and accuracy with which a visual warning is brought to Ego's attention. Most of our waking life we are keeping a watchful eye on our surroundings and, despite motor-horns and air-raid sirens, we trust more in sight than in hearing to ensure our safety.

To our sight we owe our precious realization of the beauty and grandeur of nature and if our single eyes can bestow so priceless a gift on Experience, one can only wonder what strange and richer version of the universe may be reflected in the compound eyes of the butterfly as compensation for its brief existence. Animals with a highly developed sense of smell may attach as much importance to their noses as to their eyes. My bloodhound, who would inspect a new home by sniffing everything from floor to ceiling, presumably built up for himself a scent pattern of the house, for he never repeated the process. One would imagine that it was far less vivid and accurate than our own visual picture, though it certainly served his purpose well enough. A blind man, on the other hand, may depend on his sense of touch to map out his environment.

The mental picture of the 'now', instantaneously formed when we look at anything, is in itself outside space like all Experience, but we project it into space with the conviction that our picture of the outer world, with all its colour and variety, exists in that world outside ourselves and actually is the external reality. How little we can trust that conviction may be shown by a special instance. Standing at a certain angle to a mirror, I see in it the reflection of a lamp and in my mind treat the reflection as if it were really in the mirror. Yet, if I think a minute I realize that that reflection cannot be where I think it is; for someone else at another angle to the mirror sees in it at the same moment the reflection of some completely different object, say a clock. One may admit that objects seen from different angles have different appearances, but not that objects having nothing at all in common can occupy the same space simultaneously as these reflections seem to do.

When I shut my eyes and think of what I have been seeing, I shall probably reproduce the scene in time, remembering the various objects in succession and not simultaneously. Yet many people have a power of projecting visual memories into imaginary space—the faculty of visual imagery which is discussed in the next chapter.

Ego comes into the world with a passion for measurement, order

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and definition, and finds himself faced with the fluid material of Experience, which, as we said in discussing private time, is intensely refractory to such control. Since he belongs by nature to the order of the One, he endeavours to mould Experience in units with definite boundaries so that they can be clearly grasped and remembered. Vague shapes, looming and dissolving in swirling mists, are alien and meaningless to him. Experience must be crystallized and form imposed upon its fluidity, if it is to be recalled for his guidance and pleasure. Space brings with it the possibility of measurement, co-ordination and comparison, and therefore what we think we see in space commands Ego's attention. When we are awake and our eyes are fixed on what is around us, we are aware of a clear and intelligible scene in which objects can be measured, compared and counted as separate units, because our perceptions of them have been projected into space which allows of co-existence.

Sight, then, is the first of the senses and takes precedence over the others as the servant and interpreter of light. To the mystic, light transcends all other objects of his Awareness in physical nature, since it permeates Consciousness and Experience as well as the material world. It is of the essence of the Vision and appears as a bridge spanning the gulf between the orders of the One and the Many. 'The eye of God', says Philo, the Jewish mystic, 'needs no light other than Himself to see, for He is the Archetype of all light and darts out ten thousand beams.' In the world of reason and science light now holds a unique position and its behaviour, so far as present knowledge allows us to survey it, suggests that its submission to the laws we have formulated for that world is scarcely whole-hearted. Like the Ego, it seems to enjoy extra-territorial privileges, though the contradictory experiments which scientists are at present trying to reconcile may prove to be no more than reflections of human ignorance.

Second to sight among the senses, and not far behind it, comes hearing, which the invention of language might have raised to supremacy, if writing had not endowed the eyes with the power of seeing words. What is heard may be measured in time just as what is seen can be measured in space, and Ego's love of order finds delight in the rhythm and harmony of music. By it he is transported into a daedal world of sound which has no more in common with the vibrations that gave it birth than his visual outlook with the emptiness and

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electrons of science. If we had looked for the 'now' in this world of music, which has an explicit time of its own, we should have been less liable to be misled by the image of the kaleidoscope; for music, like motion, is continuous and cannot be split up into detached instants without ceasing to be music. As Bergson says, it is easy to take the notes of a melody individually and separately, but in the process the melody is completely lost.

The full measurement of the Vision as the word indicates is given by what Santa Teresa would call spiritual sight. The physical eyes are blind, but the glimpse of the One breaks into the world of the Many as though it were a visual experience. Perhaps it came to such a musician as Beethoven in a burst of music transcending the music of the spheres. Mozart's Symphonies were revealed to him in the perfect harmony of the eternal 'now'. Dr. Inge quotes in *The Philosophy of Plotinus* the following passage from Holmes' *Life and Correspondence of Mozart*:

'When and how my ideas come I know not, nor can I force them. Those that please me I retain in my memory and am accustomed, as I have been told, to hum them to myself. . . . All this fires my soul, and provided I am not disturbed my subject enlarges itself, becomes methodised and defined, and the whole, though it be long, stands almost complete and finished in my mind, so that I can survey it like a fine picture or a beautiful statue, at a glance. Nor do I hear in my imagination the parts successively, but I hear them as it were all at once. What a delight this is I cannot express. All this inventing, this producing, takes place in a pleasing lively dream. But the actual hearing of the whole together is after all the best. And this is perhaps the best gift I have my divine Master to thank for.'

Words of power may be the accompaniment of the Vision, such as 'the still small voice' that spoke to Moses and the cry of 'Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me?' The Chinese mystic is confirmed in his quest of the Light by 'the presence of the gods in the valley'. 'Men are heard talking as though at a distance of several hundred paces, each one quite clear. But the sounds are like an echo in a valley. One can always hear them but never oneself.' Santa Teresa continually talked with God and so did countless other saints. A heavenly fragrance, as it were divine incense, is occasionally mentioned as enveloping the seer of the Vision that the humble nose may have its part to play, and for the communicant there should be no irreverence in speaking of the taste of God.

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It is of vital importance to Ego to distinguish between his fresh perceptions and his memories. His life depends on his action in the outer world and that action must be guided by the latest information available as to the state of that world. What was true yesterday may not be true to-day and a date-line constitutes a significant part of a newspaper correspondent's dispatch. It is rare that Ego has any difficulty in distinguishing between new Experience and memory, for the news, to carry on the metaphor, stares him in the face with sensational headlines and bold black type, when it is of intimate concern to him. Memory in fainter fount finds a more modest place on a back page. Moreover, just as an important telegram bears not only the date but also the place of its origin, Ego's urgent perceptions are localized in the world from which they come. They are projected into the space from which they were transmitted; his memories remain within the Self. We seem to see and hear outside our bodies and smell, taste and touch in parts of them which lie materially outside Experience, but all the activities of thought and imagination which deal with memories take place within the boundaries of the Private Universe.

Only a small fraction of our incoming Experience is presented to Ego in organized form, object distinct from object and neatly ticketed with a word or words to establish and preserve its identity. Bergson may be right when he holds that it is the function of the brain and nervous system to select the perceptions of most value to Ego and to reject the valueless, and not to produce or preserve them. If so, the choice is still too extensive for all of them to be reduced to form and order. They pour in in a continuous stream composed of a multiplicity of simultaneous elements and many of them escape the machinery devised to give them shape and definition, while the complexity of others defies disentanglement. Much undifferentiated Experience finds its way into the Self and remains there in the shape of vague and shadowy memories. At any moment we perceive much more than we notice and looking back can often detach from the protoplasmic jelly of unformed Experience perceptions which had slipped past our attention, recollect them and give them shapes and names. 'Surely you noticed this or that,' someone may say, and at first we may confidently reply that this or that was not there to notice. Then after a plunge into the depths of memory, we may come back with the remembrance of something which had at the time eluded attention.

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In the beginning we compared Experience to a limitless dark ocean with a tiny lighted patch in the midst of its waters. Our subject compels us to a wearisome use of similes and metaphors, for the spiritual language consists mainly of parables and paradoxes. We must beware of metaphors, for they are two-edged weapons and liable to mislead, since no analogy can be complete. But who can write of the spaceless except in terms of space and of the timeless except in terms of time? Coleridge, who never scrupled to indulge in metaphor when it suited his purpose, denounced them with startling metaphorical fury.

'The confusion of metaphor with reality is one of the fountains of the many-headed Nile of credulity, which, overflowing its banks, covers the world with miscreations and reptile monsters, and feeds by its many mouths the sea of blood.'

We must try to avoid such a confusion of metaphor and reality, and, by regularly reminding ourselves that the spiritual language is by its nature figurative, may hope to escape the horrors with which Coleridge menaces the abuse of analogy.

It is clear from what goes before that the likening of Experience to the ocean illustrates only one of its aspects; it can by no means be regarded as nothing more than a weltering waste of random waters without order or design. There is much within it which has been neatly arranged and classified. It is strange that we know so little of our memories which are more truly ours than any other possession. They are the immaterial body which gives to Ego his unique individuality. They came into existence for us and for us alone and how they survive when we cease to be aware of them must count among the deepest mysteries of life. Hypnosis suggests that they are indestructible—at least during individual life—and we know that once formed they may retain their identity for many years. If, indeed, we die, they must die with our death, though our body stays behind till corruption does its work.

Shelley, in the *Adonais*, unveils the vaguer aspect of the world of memory, laying bare the secret country of a poet's mind.

'And others came . . . Desires and Adorations,  
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,  
Splendours and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations  
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;

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And Sorrow with her family of Sighs,  
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam  
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,  
Came in slow pomp: the moving pomp might seem  
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,  
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,  
Lamented Adonais.

The poet looks out upon the world through the transparency of such beautiful and immaterial figures and another poet, Coleridge, once toyed with a fancy which, he thought, might illustrate the relation of soul and body in a delicate and subtle simile. Unhappily he never worked out the idea. 'I fear', he says, with a sigh, 'I can make nothing out of it.'

'The soul within the body—can I, any way, compare this to the reflection of the fire seen through my window on the solid wall, seeming, of course, within the solid wall, as deep within as the distance of the fire from the wall? I fear I can make nothing out of it . . .'

*(Anima Poetæ.)*

'The window of my library at Keswick is opposite to the fireplace. At the coming on of evening, it was my frequent amusement to watch the image or reflection of the fire that seemed burning in the bushes or between the trees in different parts of the garden.'

*(The Friend.)*

Just as Coleridge looked out on his garden through the reflection of the fire in the room behind him, mirrored in the glass of the window-pane, so we, as well as the poets, observe the world outside through the transparency of our Experience which colours and informs what lies beyond. Our 'now' can only be seen through our past. Perhaps we might carry the simile a little further and compare the Vision to the reflection of the rising moon beaming from another sphere through a window behind the observer, confused and blurred by the other reflections on the pane and by the garden beyond.

Santa Teresa complains bitterly of memory, because like a moth it is always fluttering between her and the light of God, and her idea of

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memory seems to have been derived from St. Augustine's remarkable analysis of its nature in the Tenth Book of the *Confessions*. No one has more acutely realized the miracle of remembrance and the reader will do well to study the whole passage in which the mystic of fifteen hundred years ago anticipates so brilliantly the discoveries of modern psychology. The following quotations from Pusey's translation will illustrate the general tenor of his argument.

'And I come to the fields and spacious palaces of my memory, where are the treasures of innumerable images, brought into it from things of all sorts perceived by the senses. There is stored up, whatsoever besides we think, either by enlarging, diminishing, or any other way varying those things which the sense hath come to and whatsoever else hath been committed and laid up, which forgetfulness hath not yet swallowed up and buried. When I enter there, I require what I will, to be brought forth, and something instantly comes; others must be longer sought after, which are fetched as it were out of some inner receptacle; others rush out in troops, and while one thing is desired and required, they start forth, as who should say, "Is it perchance I?" These I drive away with the hand of my heart, from the face of my remembrance; until what I wish for be unveiled, and appear in sight, out of its secret place. Other things come up readily in unbroken order, as they are called for; those in front making way for the following; and as they make way, they are hidden from sight, ready to come when I will. All which takes place, when I repeat a thing by heart.

"There, are all things preserved distinctly under general heads, each having entered by its own avenue. . . . All these doth that great harbour of the memory receive in numberless secret and inexpressible windings; to be forthcoming, and brought out at need; each entering in by his own gate, and there laid up. . . . There also I meet with myself, and recall myself, and when, where and what I have done, and under what feelings. There be all which I remember, either on my own experience, or other's credit. Out of the same store do I myself with the past continually combine fresh and fresh likenesses of things, which I have experienced, or, from what I have experienced, have believed: and thence again infer future actions, events and hopes, and all these again I reflect on, as present.

' "I will do this or that", say I to myself, in that great receptacle of my mind, stored with the images of things so many and so great,



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"and this or that will follow." So speak I to myself: and when I speak, the images of all I speak are present, out of the same treasury of memory; nor would I speak of any thereof, were the images wanting. . . .

'Great is the power of memory, a fearful thing, O my God, a deep and boundless manifoldness.'

The great Christian mystic describes a world of Experience as concretely as possible and both he and Shelley incline towards a personification of memories. They speak of them as if they were conscious beings and knew of their own existence. Shelley represents, as a poet had every right to do, Keats' dreams and emotions as a procession of ghostlike but none the less living abstractions. St. Augustine lends tremendous vigour to his analysis by portraying the inanimate objects of his Awareness as conscious beings. His memories rush out in troops, when they are summoned, like members of his household, each one eager to know if it is he whom the master wants. Nothing could be more legitimate and effective from the descriptive point of view, but it exemplifies the dangers of metaphor. This personification contains within itself the seed of that confusion between Consciousness and the objects of Awareness, which leads to the denial of Ego and the One.

. St. Augustine goes on to consider that other class of Experience, the abstract ideas and universals, which cannot be directly derived from any sense perception.

'But now when I hear that there be three kinds of questions, "Whether the thing be? what it is? and what kind it is?", I do indeed hold the images of the sounds, of which those words be composed, and that those words with a noise passed through the air, and now are not. But the things themselves which are signified by those sounds, I never reached with any sense of my body, nor ever discerned them otherwise than in my mind. . . . Which how they entered me, let them say if they can; for I have gone over all the avenues of my flesh, but cannot find by which they entered. . . . Whence and how entered these things into my memory? I know not how. For when I learned them, I gave not credit to another man's mind, but recognized them in mine. . . . In my heart then they were, even before I learned them.'

Much travail has been brought upon philosophers by the problem of *a priori* knowledge, which St. Augustine states in its simplest terms. Following our interpretation of the Vision, we may believe that when

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life enters the world of the Many, it carries with it a reflection of the nature of the One in its relation to that world. For if we can predicate of the One in itself Consciousness and Consciousness only, its very unity in contact with the Many becomes reason and order, beauty, justice and all the excellences of God. They spring from the perfection of the One and can never find full realization in the Many, but their images, as St. Augustine calls them, their copies, as Plato says, enter into Experience. Selfhood, the conception of Consciousness, can only have found its way into Experience from the order of the One.

Considering Experience in its capacity as mind, we must use figurative language which is far too precise to describe its mysterious working. The Experience, packed within the ever-expanding repository of memory, may be compared to an infinitely complicated and delicate machine which is still undergoing its trials and is being subjected to continual adjustment. The whole of Ego's past, even that which remains in a raw undifferentiated condition, is organized in an intricate system through which in one direction the vital energy, the motive power of life, is transmitted to the organism and, in the other, the information gathered by the organism from its environment is presented to his Awareness in a form that he can understand.

Past Experience checks or accelerates, directs and controls, the power of Ego's will with the equivalent of steering, starting and reversing gear, brakes and accelerators, and the machine may often seem to pay scant respect to his immediate purpose. With equal authority, it selects and shapes new Experience which continually arises from the clash between the orders of the One and the Many; canalizing it, passing it through screens and filters and moulding it in accordance with the needs of life as the past has defined them. Again, to change the metaphor, it automatically classifies, under the impulse of Ego's energy, the new additions to its store, as a librarian might catalogue his new books, so that the class of memories most likely to be required for daily use and most agreeable to Ego's desires may be always ready to hand, while memories disagreeable or of no particular interest are consigned to the back shelves far away. Rejected Experience in its undifferentiated condition is left to drift into its appointed place in the fabric of the machine.

New Experience enters mind in a continuous stream compounded of a multiplicity of simultaneous elements which defy separation and

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definition. Coleridge speaks of 'the streamy nature of association which thinking curbs and rudders' and curiously enough found in this mixture of metaphors the origin of evil. Within the mind, the fluidity of Experience is, as it were, congealed and its flow slowed down, until portions of it are frozen in the moulds of past memory into well-defined shapes, to which words can be attached and individual permanence given through the symbolism of language. Again we must change our metaphor, for these frozen shapes of Experience never appear as separate entities; they cling together in a mass like the hooked atoms of Lucretius or a lump of burrs closely squeezed together and held by their interlocking hooks. Coleridge talks of 'the hooks and eyes of memory', and every memory is lashed tight to other memories, each of them fastened to countless others by the grapnels of association, till they form a conglomeration and, if we try to disentangle from it a single unit, it will carry with it a host of associated companions.

This complicated fabric of past Experience, the machine of memory and mind, is Ego's personality, character, temperament, the soul which clothes the inmost spirit, that phenomenal self with which he is wont to identify himself and which is momentarily obscured by the Vision. Normally the issue of Ego's will in thought and action depends upon it and its system of resistances and controls, incentives and deterrents, habits and inhibitions, taboos and moral principles, pleasure and desire, fear and pain, to encourage, hinder or perhaps bar and throw into reverse the impulse transmitted to the organism.

There may be an urgent call for action from the physical world and the response to the external stimulus must be practically automatic, if it is to be effective. Actions which originally required deliberation become habits when continually repeated and habits carried on through generations become instincts. Professor McDougall the psychologist defines instincts as 'hereditarily determined channels for the discharge of nervous energy'. The vital force pulses through these well-worn channels as soon as the stimulus from without appears in the zone of attention and the response is immediate and automatic. The machinery of instinctive action built up through countless generations may operate in the absence of any special stimulus and the essential functions of life, breathing, digestion and the like, are carried on without attention or thought. Perpetual repetition, as it were, hardens the Experience connected with it and wears in it permanent grooves which auto-

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matically conduct the vital energy to the proper place of application. This system of habits and instincts may be to some extent modified by the repetition which produced it. Discipline and practice may overcome the most deep-rooted customs and uses.

Experience, then, apart from immediate new perceptions, is composed of memories and these memories can be divided into three classes: those of which we are at any moment aware, those which can be recalled, whether with ease or with difficulty, and those which lie beyond the reach of our recollection. These classes shade off into one another without a clear-cut boundary line. There is always Experience on the edge of the field of Awareness, which, though for the moment unobserved, scarcely needs recalling; memories that seem utterly lost in the night of forgetfulness will suddenly be summoned back by some chance link of association; and the psychologist prides himself on digging up from the depths of the Under-Mind Experience that the Ego to whom it belongs could never retrieve.

The distinction between the three classes, however, is clear enough in a general way. The bulk of Experience belongs to the last category of irrecoverable memories which is almost as immeasurable in time as it is in quantity; for in it is gathered everything that Ego has learnt through æons of evolution. How life has succeeded in preserving the Experience it has gained and in passing it on from one generation to another, we cannot know. Ego seems to carry with him through all his births and re-births in the world of the Many the Experience he has accumulated in a series of existences, the *karma*, as the East would say, which formed the road he has already trod and is still building the road over which he is travelling and must travel in the future.

. . . past experience . . .

Is not the experience of one life only,  
But of many generations—not forgetting  
Something that is probably quite ineffable.'

T. S. ELIOT. *The Dry Salvages*.

Not so long ago all such irrecoverable Experience would have been dismissed as dead and done with—non-existent, since *ex hypothesi* we cannot recollect it, and it is the triumph of modern psychology to have broken into this lost home of long-forgotten memories and to have proved not only that it does exist, but also that it exercises a profound

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if unsuspected influence upon our daily lives. The 'subconscious' or 'unconscious' are, as we have said, dangerously misleading labels, but the mysterious Under-World of the Self to which they are applied is certainly no fiction. The existence of this hidden world had been divined by earlier thinkers, but it was not until the coming of Freud and his followers that a systematic attempt was made to map out its boundaries and to describe its inhabitants.

Mind, like Bergson's brain, makes a fastidious selection of the Experience to be held available for Ego's attention and is therefore equipped with machinery for the disposal of all it rejects. Ego would be utterly at a loss if he was suddenly confronted with the whole army of perceptions which his senses could raise from the external world in a single hour, if they were working at full capacity and all their recruits admitted. Only a fraction of these perceptions must be presented to him at a time; Experience that has served its purpose must be thrust away to make room for new, as the bulldozers push broken-down vehicles from the road of our army, and superfluous perceptions consigned to their proper place in the organization well outside Awareness. No woman would knit while she read, if all the complicated little movements required by knitting were jumbled up in her field of Awareness with the story of her book. Unpleasant and painful memories are among the first to disappear, for life has nothing to gain from excessive brooding over its sorrows and discomforts. Most people with healthy minds will find, if they look back over their past, that the sieve of time which is the sieve of mind, has held up within reach of easy recollection many agreeable memories, allowing much that was painful and unpleasant to pass away into the repository of the forgotten.

Mind, however, is an imperfect instrument which has grown up empirically out of a system of trial and error. Its development at the best known to us is very far from complete, and there are many minds in which the devices for the rejection of unacceptable Experience work with excessive facility. It is essential that nothing of importance to Ego should be omitted from, or misrepresented in, the information from the outer world of men and things that is presented to his attention through his mind. His thoughts and feelings will be distorted and his actions misdirected if he is out of touch with truth in the world of the Many. Much trivial and customary Experience may safely pass unnoticed, but no event of significance must be allowed to slip through, until it has

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taken its place in the zone of Ego's attention. There it will combine with other memories and will be reduced to due proportion in the scale of Experience. Thence, gradually obscured by new perceptions, it will pass away to be forgotten, after, perhaps, it has given rise to appropriate action in the organism outside and a similar reaction within. So tears will blunt the edge of sorrow and repentance lighten the gloom of guilt.

Sometimes a mind too sensitive will throw into the discard emotions that are too agonizing, thoughts that are too disturbing, sins that are too shameful, to be acknowledged, before Ego has had more than a glimpse of their reality. Perhaps it will palliate their unwelcome nature or conceal it under false symbols which always lie ready to hand to make life easier. The sin will be smothered in its excuses and the very existence of the pain denied. There is little in common between the Vision and Christian Science. Those half-formed memories sink down into the intricate convolutions of irrecoverable Experience, where the mind can never reach them again to mitigate their exaggerations of guilt and pain by setting them in their proper station in the scheme of life. There they work unobserved in utter darkness, obstructing Ego's will in blind opposition instead of curbing and controlling his activity in the light of reason, and in the end they may undermine and split in sunder the unity of the mind which is Ego's only compass in his course through life. In the depths of the soul they are drawn by association to memories of primitive superstition, curses that cannot be redeemed, the panic terrors of savagery and conceptions of the wrath of God, which have long lain dormant and are now awakened to mischief—that inheritance of humanity which the theologians call original sin.

✓ "The backward look behind the assurance  
Of recorded history, the backward half-look  
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror."

T. S. ELIOT. *The Dry Salvages*.

Meantime a crisis has arisen in the accessible Experience on which Ego depends for the direction of his waking life. The gaps in his memories falsify his outlook and the false symbols which have disguised the reality of Experience turn into empty fantasies, which are built up by wishful thinking into castles in the air. Since such fantasies are lies taken for truth, real to Ego but unrelated to the outer world,

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other fantasies must be found to bolster up their plausibility, until at last the machine of mind is racing in the vacuum of an imaginary world and the organism breaks down in disorder and madness.

It stands to reason that there is no entry to the land of lost memories for the mind that rejected them. Neither reason nor introspection can reach them, for mind will have nothing to do with what has been once and finally rejected. By himself Ego has no possibility of recollecting them in their original form. They may show their ugly heads in the symbolism of his dreams and give the psychologist a key to their nature, but the meaning of the symbols is concealed from the dreamer. They can only be approached through the medium of another mind which does the work the first mind failed to do. By the question and answer of psychoanalysis, they can be disentangled from the nondescript mass of forgotten Experience and reduced to a form that the first Ego can apprehend and recognize as true. The recovery of these missing memories fills up the gaps in his Experience and expels the fantasies that were masquerading as true to outer reality and wrecking his life.

Memories when they are put away and not looked at for long spaces of time, that is are not freshened by another passage through the mind and Awareness, tend to coalesce and lose their lines of demarcation, degenerating to the condition of the rejected stream of perception, which was never fully shaped and differentiated. They lose their distinguishing symbols, their word-labels, and return to a state of indiscrimination as molten bronzes may be merged in a shapeless mass of metal by a conflagration. When Ego is first introduced by the psychologist into this unsuspected underworld of the Self, little wonder if he finds himself utterly adrift, lost in the mists of undifferentiated Experience as though he were wandering bewildered, without sense of distance or direction, in the shapelessness of a London fog or groping about a dark bedroom, with his power of orientation gone, when he has suddenly been awakened from the depths of sleep.

The psychiatrists, the healers of souls, stumbled on this unexplored world in their search for the causes and cure of nervous diseases for which no physical conditions could account. They found that they could often restore bodily and mental health to their patients by imposing order on the worst of its confusion with the aid of the word and other symbols which had never been applied or, if once applied, had been lost, and by releasing these lost memories to be brought back into the

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light of Awareness. Hewing in this dark mine, they detached coagulated lumps of Experience in which suppressed shame and guilt had united with those primeval horrors and superstitions of which we have spoken. They unearthed complicated knots of memory—they called them complexes—which they could only disentangle in terms of primitive legends.

Mythology has preserved and, through the genius of the Greek poets, moulded in deathless form, the obscure strivings and passions, the blind hopes and fears of primitive man, which are not so unlike our own and which still slumber in the depths of our Experience as part of our race heritage. The shadowy underworld of the Homeric dead is but an image of the dark place within ourselves which holds lost memories, the Under-Mind. Freud seized upon the legend of Narcissus and in a good cause tarnished its graceful beauty with sexual implications and found deep significance in the ruthless web of fate in which the characters of the Aeschylean drama vainly struggle, making 'Narcissism' and 'the Oedipus complex' familiar and ugly technical terms.

The layman is tempted to believe that the scientist can carve out of the quarries of lost Experience almost any evil images he chooses. Sex is responsible for so much repressed shame and guilt that Freud might well reduce to its terms all irrecoverable Experience and find the prime mover of life, not in the One which he denies, but in 'libido', the sum total of the 'component instincts' entering into the sexual urge. With almost equal plausibility, Adler put forward selfishness, the idolatry of the phenomenal self, the love of power, as the mainspring of life and all its activities. With broader outlook, Jung found at the root of all experience a collective racial 'unconscious', containing the archetypes that express the primitive concepts, needs and aspirations of humanity. The existence of such a factor in every conscious being can hardly be doubted, but Jung sometimes seems to attribute Consciousness (in our sense of the word) to his 'unconscious' with a lightheartedness which may shake the reader's confidence in his logic. The important fact remains that the artificial recovery of lost memories has accomplished many remarkable cures of diseases of the soul which previously defied all treatment.

In this brief and most inadequate sketch of the Under-Mind, the reader will probably detect the almost irresistible temptation to a writer to describe the objects of Awareness as though they were alive



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and conscious—in fact to personify memory, as the poets do. So deep-rooted is the confusion created in our minds by the equivocal use of the word ‘consciousness’. We think of thoughts and feelings as parts or states of ‘consciousness’, call them conscious, as if they knew of their own existence and could think and feel themselves, forgetting that they must be thought and felt and that only a conscious subject can think and feel them.

Since Science denies the conscious subject or at least dissipates him vaguely in the stream of Experience, psychology is bound to treat its material in this way and personify Experience. Indeed in the ‘unconscious’, under the influence of mythology, it positively deifies the lost memories of the distant past, evoking into the modern world the primitive devils of superstition, the dark gods dear to the heart of D. H. Lawrence. It is true that the psychologist only calls them up to exorcize them and cure his patients, but it is not surprising that such black magic makes many an orthodox scientist shiver and mutter veiled accusations of mysticism.

Certainly the Self emerges in a curious aspect from the Freudian analysis. Its unity composed of the variety of Experience centred round Ego disappears and instead we have a trinity consisting of a super-Ego mainly ‘unconscious’ and containing the moral elements of the soul, a ‘conscious’ Ego, and ‘id’, the ‘unconscious’ reservoir of instinctive urges. Perhaps this trinity is now out of date. I find it hard to believe that a mainly ‘unconscious’ super-Ego, however moral he may be, could long hold the field. Be that as it may, psychology has a strong tendency to treat the Self as a battleground of warring personalities, if not gods, though every now and then it pulls itself together under the rebukes of orthodoxy and converts Experience into a system of blind opposing forces.

Most of these difficulties arise from the denial of Ego, the conscious subject after the order of the One, Kant’s transcendental unity of apperception. The Vision affirms his presence and instantly introduces into the world of the Self a simplification as far-reaching as Hinton’s hypothesis in the physical world. The only force at work within the Self proceeds from Ego and the One, and all the motions we observe in Experience proceed from that impulsion just as the movements of the parts of a motor are due to a single propelling power.

Mind is a complicated machine and it is the harder to understand,

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because it is a defective product of evolution, still being developed, and constructed of the same material as that on which it works. It might be compared to a calculating machine which on the pulling of a lever seems to the non-mathematical to perform miracles. The machinery for de-husking, burnishing and sorting coffee beans, which I was once shown on the banks of the Thames, provides a simpler illustration of one way in which we may look at the operation of mind.

The beans were shot up to the top of a tall building where they were stripped of their husks which were shot away into a refuse dump below, Freud's 'unconscious'. Then they were burnished—a process comparable with that of shaping and naming perceptions. The naked burnished beans poured out on an inclined plane running from top to bottom of the building, divided into compartments by partitions pierced with holes of varying size. They rolled down the slope, and came to the first inclined partition along which they bumped, until they found in it holes of a size through which they could pass into the next compartment. Those that found no hole large enough for their exit ended up in a shoot which carried them away to a sack waiting for beans of their size. The biggest beans stopped short at the first compartment, the next size reached the second and so on down to the smallest, and so in a very short time thousands of beans had lost their indigestible coats, had been smartly polished and sorted accurately into a series of sizes. Watching the beans as they slid and bounced about, to all appearances selecting the paths they followed and the doors through which they went, it was quite hard to remember that they were not alive and sorting themselves of their own volition.

We can complete the parallel with mind and its lost memories by a slight modification in the machinery. It was designed for a single purpose and carried out its job without a hitch, but if it had come into existence by a natural evolutionary process of trial and error, it might have been necessary for the beans to pass through the holes of an initial partition before they entered the de-husking and burnishing apparatus. Some beans too large or misshapen to make their way in, might have been caught up with the husks and carried away to the refuse heap, unstripped and unpolished. The illustration is far too concrete and precise for the complex and indeterminate processes of mind, but it conveys the notions of a single impulsion, an automatic system of classification and a suggestion of life where no life is.

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There is perhaps a danger that psychology may over-emphasize the pathological side of its discoveries, since its theories are based on the study of the diseased rather than the healthy mind. In spite of all the troubles of our time, a number of minds do work quite tolerably well, lost memories and all, and a healer of souls must be very sure of the perfect organization of his own Experience, before he ventures to interfere with them. He cannot hope to organize another person's mind better than he has organized his own. It is only through his own that he can work on another's mind.

Turning back to the activities of the normal mind, let us consider what happens when Ego is preparing for deliberate action. His mind has set before him a particular end which he accepts, and he summons to the zone of attention all the appropriate perceptions and memories that he can muster to direct and control his efforts towards that end. They are, as we have said, linked together in the strangest combinations like magnetized iron filings clinging together, and they must be separated, sorted and rearranged, before the organism is set in motion.

When all is well with the soul and Ego can contemplate within his Experience the enlightenment of the Vision, the work of the mind is carried out with that quiet efficiency which is figuratively described in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

'When the Light circulates, the powers of the whole body arrange themselves before the throne, just as when a holy king has taken possession of the capital and has laid down the fundamental rules of order, all the states approach with tribute; or just as when the master is quiet and calm, menservants and maids obey his orders of their own accord, and each does his work.'

Though this mystic ideal may be rarely achieved, the Chinese Sage portrays the working of the mind and its relation with Ego as they should be in a beautiful and suggestive picture. The result of all the activities within the Self may confront Ego with an absolute ban on the contemplated action. Coué, the once popular healer, devised a trick which demonstrates this power of veto. He would tell a patient to clasp his hands tightly and at the same time to think as hard as he could that he could not possibly take them apart. Then still concentrated on that thought he was to try to separate them. As I know from my personal experience both in private and on the platform, it is quite impossible for him to unclasp them so long as he clearly formulates the absurd

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notion of their inseparability and keeps his attention focussed upon it. He may try till the sweat pours off his brow, but they will only come apart when he dismisses the silly thought and admits the truth that there is no reason in the world why he should not separate them. The clasping of the hands takes place outside the Self, but the struggle, though it produces physical fatigue, is purely mental. However hard he tries, Ego cannot dispatch an order to the organism to perform an action which is definitely represented in Experience as a sheer impossibility. The idea bars the road to action as the angel of the Lord stood in the way of Balaam's ass, and the outside observer can perceive no obstacle.

The success of the experiment depends on the subject's capacity of thinking a thought clearly and holding it in his Awareness, and it will mean nothing to those who lack this faculty. Anyone, however, can try to examine the manner of his own thinking, though the task bristles with difficulties, and I would urge the reader to analyse for himself the processes of his mind, for individuals differ more profoundly in this respect than any other, and one is able to rely only on one's own Experience and the recorded Experience of others.

In the case of deliberate action, the result achieved by the calling up of memories, whether in thought or action, stands out so definitely in the field of Awareness that it often throws into the deepest shadow that presentation of pertinent possibilities with more than lightning-like rapidity, their comparison, their acceptance or rejection, which must have led up to it. It may be easier to watch our minds when they are engaged in desultory thinking for thinking's sake. I shut my eyes to escape from the brilliantly lit landscape of the 'now' and seem to step from one world to another. At first I am confronted with a blank darkness that seems to cover the closed eyelids broken by a glimmer which is the aftermath of light. I am still trying to use my eyes. After an appreciable delay half-formed thoughts and stray words—I am unable to distinguish clearly between them—make an appearance, but they come in a stream which it is as difficult to hold in 'the hand of my heart', to use St. Augustine's phrase, as running water.

When we are in a brown study and someone breaks into it with 'A penny for your thoughts', it is no easy matter to say what we were thinking of and if we try, we generally feel that we are cheating and that the words we use conceal rather than express the truth. That is

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exactly what I feel about the last paragraph. However, I start again with closed eyes and this time after another vacant pause a word stands out clearly in the streamy phantasmagoria that drifts before me—'Coleridge', followed instantly by a second, 'Davy'. We compared the closely-linked memories to magnetized iron filings clinging together and hooked burrs squashed into a lump. These two names, associated in a book I have been reading, *The Road to Xanadu*, by Professor J. L. Lowes, of which more will be said, call up at once the oddest assortment of jumbled memories once clotted together in a poet's mind.

In a letter to Sir Humphry Davy, Coleridge tells of the startling effect produced on him by reading the unpromising words, 'Mr. Davy's Galvanic Habitudes of Charcoal', in the *Morning Post Gazeteer*.

'Upon my soul I believe there is not a letter in those words round which a world of imagery does not circumsolve; your room, the garden, the cold bath, the moonlight rocks, Barristed, Moore and simple-looking Frere, and dreams of wonderful things attached to your name—and Skiddaw, and Glaramara, and Eagle Crag, and you, and Wordsworth, and me, on the top of them!'

I cannot resist quoting Professor Lowes' footnote, 'To quote Coleridge himself, rolling off with gusto the clangorous polysyllables, "We may best apply Sir Thomas Browne's remark that many things coagulate on commixture, the separate natures of which promise no concretion".'

When I had looked up the foregoing quotations and written them down, I supposed that I had come to the end of that particular train of thought, but to my surprise my mind suddenly presented me, as an associated sequel, with a series of words and phrases so clearly defined that I could almost hear them spoken. I promptly wrote them down: 'Sherlock Holmes', 'war a preposterous way of settling disputes', 'missing portrait of General Gordon', 'Dr. Watson's wound'. I knew at once that they referred to a Conan Doyle story in which the detective astonishes Dr. Watson by reading his thoughts, but that was all I could remember. It took me a long time to find the story, 'The Card-board Box', which I had not read for many years, and what I found there throws some light on the persistence with which the mind pursues any purpose set before it and incidentally on the imperfections of my own remembering apparatus.

'Preposterous way of settling disputes' as a description of war was a memory word for word correct. General Gordon's portrait was not

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missing at all, but the fact that it had no picture to balance it on the other side of the wall served to draw the doctor's attention to a portrait of Henry Ward Beecher whose connection with the American Civil War started the main train of thought. Dr. Watson's wound also played only an accessory part. His hand stole towards it when he thought with a quivering smile of the ridiculous side of war.

Sherlock Holmes had no doubt been linked up in my mind with Coleridge and his associated images through this trick of following his friend's thoughts by deduction from his gestures, expression and what he knew of the arrangement of Dr. Watson's mind. The sentiment that war was preposterous must have been given greater prominence in my mind, when I read the story, than its originality deserved, as I remembered it so easily. The part played by General Gordon's portrait was misrepresented, but it was not forgotten, because the general had been held up to me as a hero in my childhood—I was born the year of his death—and his portrait hung above my bed in the nursery. It is less easy to account for the retention of Dr. Watson's wound to which only a casual reference is made in the story, but the jezail bullet which he had brought back in one of his limbs as a relic of his Afghan campaign always appealed to me as the one romantic feature of that prosaic character. I hope I am right in thinking that I heard of that bullet in the first Sherlock Holmes stories, which I devoured when they were published in the *Strand Magazine*, before I reached my teens. My mind, though it clung so fast to the unessential, had completely obliterated the cardinal point of the episode, Henry Ward Beecher and the Civil War, and I am afraid that it shot these memories out into the dump of lost Experience, because a classical education never provided a pigeon-hole for the storing of American history. If it had been properly organized, they would have been presented to me as an urgent reason for studying a subject of which I was unpardonably ignorant.

Analyse as we may, the basic reasons for much remembering and forgetting must always be hidden from us. Pedagogues of the old school held that nothing could produce a deeper impression on the schoolboy's memory than the cane and the reader may recall how when Benvenuto Cellini was five, his father, sitting by the fire and singing to the viol, espied among the blazing logs what he took to be a little creature like a lizard sporting in the heart of the flames. We have all seen pictures in the fire.

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'Becoming instantly aware of what the thing was, he had my sister and me called, and pointing it out to us children, gave me a great box on the ears, which caused me to howl and weep with all my might. Then he pacified me good-humouredly and spoke as follows: "My dear little boy, I am not striking you for any wrong that you have done, but only to make you remember that that lizard which you see in the fire is a salamander, a creature which has never been seen before by anyone of whom we have credible information." ' (J. A. Symonds' translation.)

That box on the ear kept the salamander in Cellini's recollection for half a century and a complex of casual memories has remained within my reach for even longer, merely because I 'made up my mind' that I would always remember it, though my resolution was not reinforced by pain. One spring morning when I was six or seven, I said to myself without rhyme or reason: 'I am going to remember this moment for the rest of my life.' I tied a metaphorical knot in my memory as I often tie a knot in my handkerchief. There was nothing in the least out of the way in the instant I had chosen to embalm, a section of a routine country walk, and I had and have no idea why I took that sudden decision. Looking back, I can only guess that the fleeting transiency of mortal life was beginning to dawn on my childish mind and that I was trying to check the flow of time by isolating in permanence and stability a single instant which would remain with me always. At any rate, I stood still and fixed every detail of that moment in my memory and now, after nearly sixty years, I can still recall that scene in a country lane with extraordinary clarity.

We have been trying to analyse Experience as memory and thought, but it is impossible to escape from the tyranny of words and in the final issue we have only been able to analyse words. Without words, memory would be short-lived indeed, thought would be little more than a stream of undifferentiated Experience and the inner life would be a sealed book; we should know that it was there, but we could not open it. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of language in the development of the mind, though we do not think entirely in words, as every writer knows. How often do thoughts and complexes of thought make their appearance without appropriate word labels and the 'mot juste', pursued laboriously through the labyrinth of memory, persistently evade our attempts to run it down.

Yet we mainly depend on the word-symbol to cut up Experience

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into intelligible lengths and separate its constituents, giving to each unit the permanence of memory. Each word carries with it the same associations as the memory for which it stands and, as the artist in words knows, a great many more. It is the magnet round which the iron filings of Experience cluster. Its magic has boundless power to stir Experience to the depths and bring to the surface forgotten memories in imaginative pageantry rich and new.

The slow invention of language made the Experience of each Ego common to all humanity, breaking down the iron boundaries of the Private Universe, and writing freed from the restrictions of time and memory that store of memories on which each mind can draw. Shorthand has so speeded up the written word that the reporter can keep pace with the speaker, but it lags far behind that inner shorthand of the mind which Ego reads in all the processes of thought. He skims over the perceptions and memories which his mind presents to him as a quick reader runs his eye over the printed page. The reader notes only a fraction of the black marks on the paper and that is enough to convey their meaning to him. His eyes and mind provide him with the minimum of perceptions necessary for his purpose. Thinking is an infinitely swifter process than reading. Ego glances over perceptions, thoughts, feelings and their symbols on the way to the conclusion of his train of thought with such speed that if he looks back, he finds no trace of the way he reached it, except perhaps the equivalent to the reader of the fragments of a letter or two in each word noted and not every word in a line remarked at all. It is this shorthand way of thinking that makes the analysis of mind so difficult.

In conclusion a word must be said as to the material side of these activities which we have been examining from within. At the outset of this chapter, we accepted the outside world as in some sense a reality without attempting to fathom its nature and we must adopt the same attitude towards the brain and nervous system which belong to that world and which we connect with the mind and the processes of Experience. We cannot hope to discover that relationship and psycho-physical parallelism will serve as well as any other label to hide our ignorance. If by some miraculous contrivance of X-rays and mirrors, a scientist could watch his own brain at work, he would be no nearer to understanding the connection between his thoughts and feelings, and the physical movements he would detect in his brain.



## Experience and Mind

Bergson argued plausibly that one little brain could not possibly hold impressions enough to account for all our Experience and memories with the endless permutations and combinations of which we are aware in life. The argument loses something of its force, if we think of the world line of the cerebro-neural system as perhaps running through all the light years between birth and death in the fourth dimension. There can be no limiting velocity in the world of Experience, as it is spaceless, and without space there can be no velocity, so that the law valid in the physical universe that nothing can outstrip light would not be broken by a man looking back into his past or for that matter forward into his future.

To sum up in one last simile, Ego sits like a Judge in the Court of the Self, administering the Law of the One, the Law of the Perfect. On that Law which knows no exception all his judgments must be based, but its application in each particular case depends on the evidence which Mind has collected and brings into court from the world of the Many. Outside that evidence, Ego cannot pass and as Mind is a fallible and imperfect machine and the evidence it can produce always incomplete, there must be many errors in the application of the Law, but from the Judge's decision there is no appeal and Mind is automatically set in motion to carry out his verdict.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE GATES OF SLEEP

There was a Being whom my spirit oft  
Met on its visioned wanderings far aloft. . . .  
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves  
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves  
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor  
Paved her light steps.—SHELLEY, *Epipsychidion*.

Sunt geminae somni portae; quarum altera fertur  
Cornea; qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris:  
Altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto;  
Sed falsa ad coelum mittunt insomnia manes.

VIRGIL, *Aeneid* vi, 893.

**I**n the previous chapter, we considered organized Experience or mind in its relations both to action in the external world and to thought within the Self. Imagination falls within the latter activity and its waking operation leads us naturally to a study of dreams and the other phenomena of sleep. When mind is acting in the capacity of imagination, Ego is apt to interfere more constantly with its working than when he leaves it to present to him a train of thought or the solution of some problem which it has formulated. He cannot go outside the Experience at his disposal nor can he dispense with the particular links of association which hold his memories together, but he is able to regroup and reshape his material and build it up into an imaginary world in which his craving for the perfection of the One may find a fuller satisfaction than in that picture of the world outside presented to him through his senses.

‘Imagination, which from earth and sky,  
And from the depths of human phantasy,  
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills  
The Universe with glorious beams. . . .’

Ego must not confuse the reality of his fantasies with the reality of

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the external world under pain of losing touch with life, but apart from this he is free to indulge in them to his heart's content and with the aid of art found for them an abiding city in the Experience of his fellow-men. The success with which he ministers to his own desire and that of humanity depends both on the light of the One shining within him and on the quality of the memories from which his imaginings are born. Towards the end of the last century, Sir Francis Galton instituted an inquiry into the nature of imagery, the visual aspect of memory. He began by writing to a number of scientists, 'as they were the most likely class of men to give accurate answers', asking them 'to call up before their mind's eye a picture of their breakfast table and then note the illumination, definition and colouring of the resulting image'. To his amazement, 'the great majority protested that mental imagery was unknown to them, and they looked upon me as fanciful and fantastic in supposing that the words "mental imagery" really expressed what I believed everybody supposed them to mean. They had no more notion of its true nature than a colour-blind man, who has not discerned his defect, has of the nature of colour. They had a mental deficiency of which they were unaware'.

Professor Flugel tells the story in *A Hundred Years of Psychology*. Further investigation showed that visual imagery, as Galton understood it, was regularly to be found in other classes of mankind, particularly among the young. It was clear, however, that this gift stood in no relation to the power of thought and that it tended to atrophy among those who devoted their lives to abstract thinking. The visual image provides a valuable label for a memory, but the mind may be so constituted as to prefer to employ other symbols for this purpose and the faculty of retaining such images is lost. Thought and imagination are distinct activities of the mind and imagination grows rusty, if it is allowed to fall into disuse.

Imagination is the special faculty of the artist who by the rules of his art must keep the two faculties perfectly balanced, and for the moment we will confine our inquiry to the artist's raw material, the images which seem to be formed spontaneously and without effort of thought or artistic composition, passing gradually from the day-dream to the phantasms of sleep.

Coleridge had a mind like the British Museum Library, to borrow a phrase G. K. Chesterton used of Browning, and its shelves were

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loaded with volumes of extraordinarily vivid memories, borrowed from innumerable sources and each neatly labelled with its appropriate word symbol. He was deeply interested in the workings of his own mind and psychologists have scarcely made the most of the instructive discoveries he recorded, not only when he was engaged in his art as a poet, but also when he was trying to understand himself. Throughout his life, he was haunted by what he called ocular spectra, images which flashed up in waking hours with singular vividness and wealth of detail, memories of past experience often magically compounded into a completely new picture. 'Impressions', says Professor Lowes, 'retained on the retina of the eye with an independent luminousness and precision after the passing of some flash of vision, as a window which has leaped at night into dazzling conflagration in a blaze of lightning hangs printed for an instant in sharp definition upon the dark.'

In a letter to Southey, Coleridge writes: 'While I wrote that last sentence, I had a vivid recollection, indeed an ocular spectrum, of our room in College Street, a curious instance of association.'

In *Biographia Epistolaria* the poet tells Godwin of a picture which floated into his Awareness from he knew not where, carrying with it no trace of its meaning or derivation.

'As I bent my head, there came a distinct vivid spectrum upon my eyes; it was one little picture—a rock, with birches and ferns on it, a cottage backed by it, and a small stream. Were I a painter, I would give an outward existence to this, but it will always live in my memory.'

Daydreams of this kind lead us from Ego wide-awake to the images of the borderland of sleep. They belong to that half-way house in which certain psychic activities unconnected—or only remotely connected—with the senses begin to awake, that debatable territory where strange things are apt to happen and visions and delusions are at home. Ego ceases to hold his attention focussed on the 'now' marked by contact with the outer world, whether it has been presenting to him new perceptions or a procession of thoughts and memories. It is the first step towards escape from the entanglement of the Many and to that turning in upon himself which bears him home to the One in the depths of dreamless sleep.

Wide-awake, I am lacking in the faculty of visual memory, perhaps because it has been my trade to record my Experience in words which are conditioned more by time than space. With an effort I can call up

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a familiar scene, particularly of childhood, but the images enter space with difficulty and none of them appear of their own accord. Their lines flicker; their details elude my observation; they are dimly lighted. I cannot grasp the picture as a whole with any distinctness. It is only in time, in a catalogue of successive impressions such as a journalist might jot down in his note-book, that I can satisfactorily recollect a landscape. On the other hand, on the fringes of sleep, I have been accustomed all my life to the apparition of Coleridge's ocular spectra, which science now dignifies with the title of hypnagogic images, heralds of sleep, though they may also occur at the moment of waking. It will be well, before we say more about them, to look more closely at sleep itself and the approaches to it.

Scientists, though they admit that they know little or nothing about the nature of sleep, have devised a useful measuring rod of its intensity. The degrees of Ego's abstraction from waking life can be reckoned and compared by the amount of disturbance needed to wake him. The shock required to bring Ego out of a daydream or brown study defies calculation, but graphs have been worked out showing the intensity of normal slumber in its various stages during the night. No doubt, sleep, whether light or heavy, is largely a matter of health, personal idiosyncrasy and habit, and it would be absurd to look for mathematical exactitude in these graphs which can have only a general and approximate validity, but they provide an objective standard for distinguishing between three quite definite stages of slumber.

If we take a scale of intensity for uninterrupted sleep ranging from zero degrees for the waking level to a hundred degrees for the point of maximum intensity, experiments show that the first stage is expressed by something between one and two degrees. The would-be sleeper is hovering between waking and sleeping and may be aware of the phantasmagoria of hypnagogic images. The writer finds that this half and half condition rarely lasts more than a few minutes, unless he deliberately prolongs it, and if he is very tired, it may be too brief to be perceptible.

The second stage consists in an abrupt and headlong plunge into the utmost depths of slumber. In about half an hour the maximum of intensity, a hundred degrees, is reached, and the sleeper is as fast asleep as any man can be this side death. He stays only an instant at the bottom of the gulf and returns towards the surface almost as

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quickly as he plunged. On his downward plunge, he may sink through ninety-eight degrees in half an hour; on his return, he rises through seventy degrees in the same period.

After this adventure, sleep gradually declines from thirty degrees to ten degrees in the next two hours; then there comes a tendency to a slow increase to fifteen degrees between the fourth and fifth hour of slumber, followed by an equally slow regression to ten degrees, a level which is maintained till just before waking. This condition may be called the dream state and it is to be remarked that it is far nearer to the waking line than to the momentary maximum of intensity.

Three stages of sleep may be distinguished: first, the borderland of fantasies, not exceeding two degrees; then the sudden plunge into Oblivion at a hundred degrees and the swift return to thirty degrees, which may be regarded as a single stage; thirdly, the dream state in which the sleeper passes from thirty degrees to a general level of about fifteen or ten. If the reader considers his own sleep experience, he will, I think, find that these states occur regularly in normal circumstances and that they follow one another in this order, though the rule is liable to exceptions.

The hypnagogic images of the first stage of sleep had always been familiar to me and I naturally assumed that everyone was familiar with them. One does not usually speak of them, as they elude recollection, but when I began to take an interest in them, I mentioned them to a number of my friends. Like Galton, I was astonished to find that many of them did not know what I was talking about and had no idea that any such experience could be. Either they had not noticed them or they were incapable of seeing them. Several have told me that since I drew their attention to this phenomenon, they have made acquaintance with ocular spectra and amuse themselves by watching them before they go to sleep. Galton's inquiry suggested that visual imagery was a faculty which was specially active in youth and De Quincey, who cannot have been ignorant of Coleridge's spectra, thought they were the peculiar property of childhood. He attributed them to 'a state of the eye oftentimes incident to childhood'.

I know not whether my reader is aware that many children have a power of printing, as it were, upon the darkness all sorts of phantoms; in some that power is simply a mechanic affection of the eye; others have voluntary or semi-voluntary power to dismiss or summon such

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phantoms; or as a child once said to me when I questioned him on this matter: "I can tell them to go, and they go; but sometimes they come, when I don't tell them to come."

What De Quincey meant by his 'mechanic affection' of the eye, I do not know, though gazing at the spectra as they come and go with intent to remember them makes the eyes tired, shut though they are. The faculty of seeing them is probably more highly developed in childhood, though it is not necessarily lost in later years, as Coleridge's example shows, and darkness is not essential as a background to these automatic pictures. I remember as a small boy on summer mornings, when one was never allowed to get up as early as one wanted, whiling away the time by fixing my eyes upon the charred black patches made on a beam by a flaring oil lamp. As soon as I looked at them, these shapeless marks formed themselves into a landscape; in the foreground, there was usually a stile at the side of a five-barred gate, images of which the originals belonged to a neighbouring field. Somehow, other marks were converted into people who seemed to move; an old man might climb the stile and start across the field; another figure might appear hurrying after him and perhaps catch him up before he was half-way across. There would follow all kinds of exciting scenes long since forgotten, but I am sure that I had no power to construct them after my will. Once when I was dressing, I inspected the burnt patches, standing on a chair, and was puzzled to find that they had no intelligible shape and offered no conceivable basis for the moving pictures which so regularly amused me. Presumably they provided me with a focus of attention round which my mind collected any visual memories that might come uppermost as I lay in bed half-awake.

Ben Jonson was no child when, as he told Drummond of Hawthornden, 'he heth consumed a whole night in lying looking to his great toe, about which he heth seen Tartars and Turks, Romans and Carthaginians fight in his imagination'.

The more highly finished images which fought round Ben Jonson's great toe and the spectra which were continually thrown up by Coleridge's mind, when he was writing or thinking, are less to our present purposes than the simple fragile phantoms which come and go at random when sleep descends, and are forgotten, if no effort is made to hold them. They are, I suspect, the simplest form of Experience ever presented to our Awareness, the raw stuff of dreams and fantasies,

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the alphabet of our visual memories. On the visual side, they correspond to those shorthand thought symbols which, when we are thinking, flash through Awareness too swiftly to be arrested by attention.

With the approach of sleep, Ego slows down the machine of organized Experience and no longer exercises over it that control and supervision which he does when awake. For though he can only act in the world of the Many through Experience, he has certain powers of direction over his mind which depends on him for its motive power. With the doors of the senses closed, and Ego's attention relaxing in the field of Awareness, the wheels of the mind still turn of their own momentum and throw up disjointed images, mere artist's sketches for some more pretentious picture, leaving them to appear for a moment and then flit away beyond the reach of recollection. They follow one another without apparent connection or intelligible association, and though each of them consists of a complex of associated memories—no memory can exist in complete isolation—there is no possibility of discovering any order in their sequence, rational or otherwise.

The writer is generally unable to recall and examine these spectra, unless he goes to bed determined to catch them like butterflies in the net of word symbols. When they appear, he must rouse himself for an instant from his drowsiness and find a word or two to apply to them and hold them fast. They do not always come, but as a rule, when the head is on the pillow and the eyes are closed, that blank of darkness with a glimmer of light, which we have mentioned before, dissolves into vague markings which gradually take shape. When a black and white pattern has formed and changed several times, distinct pictures suddenly take its place, brightly lighted and vividly coloured. They live for no more than an instant; for that instant they stand out with brilliant hues, clear-cut outlines and sharp definition. Then they flicker, dissolve and are gone. There is, perhaps, just time to marvel at the distinctness with which every leaf on a big tree is shown; it may even flash across one that the leaves are rustling in a little breeze, though no movement is seen and no sound heard.

The leaves and tree are gone and there is a moment of transition like darkness on the stage for the changing of a scene. There is movement in the darkness. Anything conceivable may next appear: a face



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drawn in the finest detail, a bunch of dead ferns, the minarets of an Eastern town, a cup, a fabulous animal, a postage stamp, a bookshelf reflected in a mirror, an insect's proboscis, the keyboard of a piano. The variety is endless. If the spectator breaks in and drowsily tries to call up an image for himself, he will find himself powerless. The next spectrum will shape itself in utter defiance of his will.

Hypnagogic images are like Melchizidek, without father, mother or genealogy. They seem to have nothing to do with waking life and familiar memories either recent or distant. No doubt a psychologist, in his detachment, could draw from them inferences as to the composition of the mind which gives them birth, but that mind itself is utterly blind to their origin and significance.

It would seem that the waking mind, held in tension between Ego's vigilance and the insistence of new perceptions pouring in from the outer world, works only on the memories pigeon-holed for the purpose within easy reach as documents of Experience in constant use for the conduct of everyday life. When the doors of the senses are closed and Ego, engrossed in his inner world of Experience, is thinking or imagining, the tension is released and mind gathers its material from farther afield, from memories classified not for hourly or daily consultation, but still held conveniently available for reference when required. When on the fringes of sleep, Ego withdraws both from the external world and Experience, mind is at liberty to wander at large through the whole library of Experience, since there is no immediate purpose to be served, and gather even in the basements of the irrecoverable stray words and sentences from long-forgotten tomes which have no place in the catalogue of waking life.

We shall have to return to this borderland condition of the Self in a later chapter, when we examine the odd phenomena usually called supernatural or supernormal, which so largely centre round it. It is the first stage on the way to the Vision as well as to the dreams of sleep, as if at this point the road of Enlightenment forked to meet again at its destination of Mystic Union and Oblivion. For the moment we must continue our inquiry into the next stages of sleep, the branch road leading to Oblivion.

As a rule, the marches of the hypnagogic images are soon passed and if we may trust the scientific graph—my own experience certainly confirms it—the next stage is represented by a headlong plunge into

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the deepest slumber. Under normal conditions, almost no record of this adventure is registered in Experience; the dreams we remember belong to the later stage when we are on our way back to waking life. Lewis Carroll, who knew as much about dreams as any man, reverses the process in the dream of Wonderland. The speed of Alice's dive down the White Rabbit's hole, that journey into the Self which he, Henry James and Francis Thompson all compare to 'a deep well', did not obliterate the recollection of the storehouse of memory through which she fell.

'Alice had not a moment to think . . . before she found herself falling down a very deep well. Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything; then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves; here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed; it was labelled "Orange Marmalade", but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar for fear of killing somebody, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.'

These cupboards and book-shelves, maps and pictures, and the jar of Orange Marmalade are typical hypnagogic images, welded into coherence by the art of the story-teller, but Alice's Wonderland begins and ends, despite interruptions of asterisks, before she reaches Oblivion. Is it fanciful to think that the asterisks in *Through the Looking-Glass*, which mark her transformation at the Eighth Square from Pawn to Queen and the apparition of a golden crown on her head are a playful symbol of a more profound experience?

Some of us may, perhaps, retain a few faint and blurred memories of the downward journey, but only the blank of Oblivion remains to tell what happened to us in the depths of sleep. Yet there clings to this nothingness, this blank gap in our Experience, a sense of refreshment and delight, and if we are suddenly awakened from it, our first emotion is one of bitter resentment.

'I think', said Socrates, after his sentence, 'that if a man had to pick out that night on which he slept too deeply for dreams and compare it with all the other days and nights of his life and then say how many

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days and nights in all his existence he had spent better and more happily than that one night—I think that any ordinary man, nay! the Great King himself, would find that they were very easy to count compared with the others.'

Socrates accepted dreamless sleep as a break in Consciousness, but since our interpretation of the Vision denies such an explanation, we can only regard the period of insensibility as marking in Experience Ego's return to timelessness and the One, to Union with God.

In sleep, the gap in Experience and time is short, for a remorseless fate hails Ego back to the world of the Many and the return journey passes through that stage of sleep which is the home of dreams. Many dream memories find their way into Experience, but much of what happens in the dream state is never known to us awake. It may be that Ego, fresh from communion with the One, may overhaul and rearrange his memories, remoulding his mind nearer to his heart's desire, with fuller power and authority than when awake. Children need abundant sleep, because their minds as well as their bodies are growing and being shaped in the way they should go. I have often gone to bed leaving a jumble of ideas and impressions in chaotic confusion and found on waking that they have all been sorted out and arranged neatly in their proper order, no memory remaining of how the work was done. I have no doubt that the reader has had similar experiences.

The dream images which we do remember belong, as we have said, to a degree of sleep far nearer the waking level than to the lowest depths of slumber. They differ in several respects from the hypnagogic images which lie still closer to the waking line. The spectra are two-dimensional, flat without thickness; the dream reproduces three-dimensional space. The spectra disregard the rules of up and down as we know them when awake. One may see them aslant or upside down, or vertical and horizontal may have changed places. I have never known a dream which ignored this basic principle of our waking imagery. The spectra, in fact, do not profess to be anything but pictures and they may be hung at any angle or even upside down; the dream makes believe that it is life as we know it awake. Again, the spectra, each one detached and complete in itself, follow one another with no pretence of continuity or connection. The dream scenes flow on and run into one another with a semblance of that streamy continuity which prevails in waking life. We are aware of nothing in Experience

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so tenuous and unsubstantial as the spectral phantoms which herald sleep; our dreams often deceive us with an imitation of solidity.

It seems that on the fringes of sleep mind is less active than in the dream state; it is almost as if it had ceased to work and Ego's attention was left to wander at random over the miscellaneous store of his memories like the beam of an erratic searchlight. In the plunge into pure Consciousness, which corresponds with Oblivion in Experience, mind is entirely inoperative and Ego's attention is turned in upon himself. One may guess that on his return journey, or immediately after it, he is engaged in re-ordering his Experience, and by the time he has reached the dream stage mind has got into its stride again, though, as it were, on a different plane. Ego sinks into the passivity of a spectator and leaves the machine to run on its own, the control of order and reason which he usually imposes upon it being removed.

The study of dreams is fraught with many difficulties; for we know, if we think about it, that our dream memories are most imperfect and almost certainly misleading. There may be some truth in Tennyson's suggestion.

‘Perchance we do but recollect the dreams  
That come just ere the waking.’

How often, like Dante, do we lose the substance of a dream on waking, though the emotions it aroused still remain!

The dreaming mind, more or less liberated from Ego's control, allows the stream of memory to pass unchecked by well-defined thought or word symbols and when it wakes, in the effort of recollection, it has to shape the evanescent and largely undifferentiated *memory* of these fluid *memories* in the moulds of words and sentences. I have observed how difficult this operation is in my own case and suppose that similar difficulties have to be faced by many others whose Experience is imperfectly determined by words and whose vocabulary is unequal to their memories. One knows that the translation into language of dream images misrepresents their reality—they were real when we were dreaming them. When we tell our dreams, we are bound to give them a precision which they did not possess in the dreaming.

It is not surprising that so many dreams are nonsensical, since they are mechanical productions presented to a passive and uncritical Ego.

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What seemed to make excellent sense, to express the highest wisdom perhaps—we can remember that—becomes mere nonsense when dragged into the cold light of common day. The perfect poem turns out to be meaningless doggerel; the key to the riddle of the universe, a hackneyed commonplace. I once started up in bed with the mystic cantrip 'vegetable-marrows' on my lips, convinced that I was uttering words of power. Ego accepts at their face value these spontaneous compositions of uncontrolled mind, until they are passed through its machine again under his direction and shown to be what they are in relation to waking life. We flatter ourselves that we are so much wiser awake than we are asleep, and forget with amazing ease that the world of sleep is utterly and unaccountably different in its essence from the world of our waking life.

In antiquity, dreams were held in high repute for the light they might shed on the future, and even to-day they are apt to arouse those emotions of superstitious awe which still lie brooding among our lost memories. The dreamer of a dream of ill omen snatches eagerly at an averting charm: 'dreams go by contraries'. The psychologist has restored something of their pristine dignity; for Experience, left to itself, may throw up from the depths of the irrecoverable memories long suppressed. I understand that the modern psychologist has come to distrust some of his patient's dreams. Once the patient has grasped the hang of dream symbolism, he is liable to dream to order and such dreams may throw more light on the psychoanalyst's mind than on his own.

A systematic inquiry into one's own dreams unquestionably affects the dreams themselves. Dreaming, or the recollection of dreams—it is impossible to distinguish between the two—is a habit which can be cultivated. Mr. Dunne, when he was trying to convince himself that his knack of dreaming prophetic dreams was not an abnormality, discovered that people who prided themselves on never dreaming began to dream and remember their dreams when they were urged to do so and provided with a bedside note-book to record them. The resolution to remember may well give birth to dreams which would not otherwise have been born.

According to De Quincey, Dryden and Fuseli, the artist, ate raw meat for the sake of enjoying splendid dreams; with what result history does not record, but the opium-eater thought that his drug would

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have been more effective and he was probably right. Splendid dreams do not usually arise from indigestion. Dreams and the Vision have nothing in common except the borderland of approach, but they are often confused in the popular mind. Fasting for the religious ascetic holds a high place among the preliminaries to the Vision; so far as my experience goes, it has little effect on dreams. I have fasted in accordance with the osteopathic regime on a diet of three or four oranges and one pint of lemonade a day for periods of a week, a fortnight and three weeks, but though I slept well, my dreams were normal and there was nothing to add to my memory of the Vision. Perhaps the way to the Vision was barred, because the fasts were carried out in comfortable and hygienic conditions such as did not prevail for the anchorite in the desert. They did, however, accentuate my faculty of visual imagery when I was awake and daydreaming, and hypnagogic spectra with increased brilliance and sharper definition swarmed around my pillow. Presumably they provide the material of delirium and delusions and were generated in my case from the cravings of unsatisfied, though unnoticed, hunger as in pathological cases from disorders in the mind and organism.

They must also play their part in nightmares when Experience itself, or the organism through Experience, obtrudes itself upon the workings of the mind, and the insistent memories and perceptions it presents uncomfortably interfere with Ego's contemplation of his ordinary dreams. Internal discomfort or anxiety will bar his plunge into Oblivion and hold him only a few degrees below waking level. The curse of the nightmare lies heavy upon childhood and most of us, even in later life, must sometimes wake from the intangible horrors of sleep, sweating with primeval terror. Most of us have shared Dante's agony:

'E quale è quei che suo dannaggio sogna,  
che sognando desidera sognare,  
si chè quel ch'è, come non fosse, agogna.'

'As one who dreams of misfortune and longs in his dream to be dreaming and is in an agony that his dream may not be a dream.'

No one knows more about the nightmare, the obverse of the artificial paradise, than the drug-taker and we see the following typical example through the minds of De Quincey and Coleridge.

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'Many years ago', writes De Quincey, 'when I was looking over Piranesi's *Antiquities of Rome*, Coleridge then standing by, described to me a set of plates from that artist, called his *Dreams*, and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of these (I describe only from memory of Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls; on the floors of which stood mighty engines and machinery, wheels, cables, catapults, etc., expressive of enormous power put forth or resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon this, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself. Follow the stairs a little farther, and you perceive them reaching an abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who should reach the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, at least, you suppose that his labours must now in some way terminate. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher, on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Once again elevate your eyes, and a still more aerial flight is descried; and there, again, is the delirious Piranesi, busy on his aspiring labours: and so on, until the unfinished stairs and the hopeless Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall.'

In my own version of the Piranesi nightmare, a tiny platform perched in mid-air, surrounded with terrific whirling machinery, takes the place of the ever-ascending stairs, and its least tolerable feature is the blood-curdling conviction that I am somewhere I ought not to be, in a place forbidden by all the laws of God and man.

But enough of the nightmares which occasionally disturb our slumbers. In the ninth book of *The Republic*, Plato lays down the conditions for wise and happy dreams and Pater, who calls it the philosopher's 'evening prayer', translates his words as follows:

'When any one, being healthfully and temperately disposed towards himself, turns to sleep, having stirred the reasonable part of him with a feast of fair thoughts and high problems, being come to full consciousness, himself with himself; and has, on the other hand, committed the element of desire neither to appetite, nor to surfeiting, to the end that this may slumber well, and, by its pain or pleasure, cause no trouble to that part which is best in him, but may suffer it, alone by itself, in its pure essence, to behold and aspire towards some object,

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and apprehend what it knows not—some event of the past, it may be, or something that now is, or will be hereafter; and in like manner has soothed hostile impulse, so that, falling to no angry thoughts against any, he goes not to rest with a troubled spirit, but with those two parts at peace within, and with that third part, wherein reason is engendered, on the move:— you know, I think, that in sleep of this sort he lays special hold on truth, and then least of all is there lawlessness in the visions of his dreams.'

In times of health and happiness, the mind, under the spell of imagination creates beauty from experience and never was dream more lovely than Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. I had reached this point in my interpretation of the Vision when a chance reference introduced me to *The Road to Xanadu*, by Professor J. L. Lowes, and there, in a brilliant and fascinating analysis of *Kubla Khan*, I found un hoped for confirmation of my theories and belief. Only a brief summary of Professor Lowes' conclusions can be given here, and the reader will find that a study of this book which deals also with the origins of *The Ancient Mariner* will be richly rewarded.

As the reader may not have a Coleridge at hand and *Kubla Khan* is probably the most spontaneous and accurate expression of dream imagery ever written or likely to be written, no apology is needed for its reproduction here with the poet's account of its birth.

### KUBLA KHAN: OR, A VISION IN A DREAM

#### A Fragment

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills;  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.



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But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants was breathing,  
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced;  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail;  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
    Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
    From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer  
    In a vision once I saw:  
It was an Abyssinian maid,  
    And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me,  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

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And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

'In the summer of 1797, the Author, then in ill-health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in *Purchas's Pilgrimage*, "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter.'

In *The Concise History of English Literature*, Mr. George Sampson pooh-poohs 'the prose rigmarole in which Coleridge tells the coming and going of the vision' as 'a characteristic piece of self-deception', but I agree with Professor Lowes that there is no apparent reason to doubt its substantial truth. The poet was more interested in the origin of

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*Kubla Khan* than in its loveliness. He declared that he had published it 'rather as a psychological curiosity than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits'. The idea that Coleridge tinkered with the poem, after, immediately on his awaking, he wrote it down, and that a second draft of it existed, arose from a commentator's blunder, as Professor Lowes has no difficulty in showing. Havelock Ellis's statement that 'the first draft of *Kubla Khan* was not the poem as we know it' is based on the same blunder. We can safely regard the poem as first-hand evidence of dream reality as it appeared to an exceptionally gifted dreamer and not as a mere waking recollection and reconstruction.

Lewis Carroll describes Alice as falling down 'a deep well' on her journey to Wonderland. This idea of the deep well as a picture of the mind, the storehouse and workshop of memory, is elaborated by Henry James in reference to a suggestion from which the plot of *The American* was eventually developed.

'I . . . dropped it for the time into the deep well of unconscious cerebration: not without the hope, doubtless, that it might eventually emerge from that reservoir, as one had already known the buried treasure to come to light, with a firm iridescent surface, and a notable increase of weight.'

John Dryden had played with a similar idea in his Dedication to the Earl of Orrery of *The Rival Ladies*.

'This worthless Present was design'd you, long before it was a Play; when it only was a confus'd Mass of Thoughts, tumbling over one another in the Dark, when the Fancy was yet in its first Work, moving the Sleeping Images of Things towards the Light, there to be distinguish'd, and then either chosen or rejected by the Judgment.'

The same basic idea appears in Francis Thompson's *Shelley*.

'Suspended in the dripping well of his imagination the commonest object becomes encrusted with imagery.'

Ruskin is even more explicit in *Modern Painters*, when he is discussing Turner's genius.

'Imagine all that any of these men (Dante, Scott, Turner, Tintoretto) had seen or heard in the whole course of their lives, laid up accurately in their memories as in vast storehouses, extending, with the poets, even to the slightest intonations of syllables heard in the beginning of their lives, and, with the painters, down to minute folds of drapery, and shapes of leaves and stones; and over all this unindexed and im-

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measurable mass of treasure, the imagination brooding and wandering, but dream-gifted, so as to summon at any moment such groups of ideas as shall justly fit each other; this I conceive to be the real nature of the imaginative mind.'

We are now concerned, not with the casual dreaming of the average man, but with the purposive activities of the artist's imagination. The artistic genius is distinguished by his power of communicating to the world in terms of waking life the imagery of his Private Universe. It needs no miracle for young men to see visions and old men to dream dreams. They come to all. The faculty of perfect expression is the birth-right of the genius alone and when we bow down before his miracles, our word of highest praise is the assertion that he has expressed what we felt but could not say.

Something has already been said about Coleridge's mind and the magic spell cast over it by words. He had read everything and remembered everything. His verbal memory was prodigious. When he was at Cambridge, his friends would meet in his rooms in Jesus and put the sun to rest with such talk as young men love about the latest books and the topics of the day. 'There was no need of having the book before us. Coleridge had read it in the morning and in the evening would repeat whole pages verbatim. . . . Pamphlets swarmed from the press. Coleridge had read them all; and in the evening, with our negus, we had them *viva voce* gloriously.'

In his mind, the image and the word coincided, the idea and its symbol were identical. Wide-awake he could scarcely distinguish between them. He actually lived the Experience he gathered second-hand from books and the persuasive realism of *The Ancient Mariner* was only due to reading books about the sea. 'It was six months', writes Professor Lowes, 'after *The Ancient Mariner* was finished that Coleridge for the first time went down to the sea in a ship and then only to sail from Yarmouth to Cuxhaven.' He seems to have grown distrustful of this faculty of his, for at midnight on 5 April 1805, he made the following resolution:

'I will write as truly as I can from experience, actual individual experience, not from book-knowledge. But yet it is wonderful how exactly the knowledge from good books coincides with the experience of men of the world.'

Dreaming and writing *Kubla Khan* was his 'actual individual experi-

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ence', though the beauty of its texture was woven from the bright memories of a hundred books.

The passage in *Purchas His Pilgrimage* over which Coleridge fell asleep and dreamed runs as follows:

'In Xamdu did Cublai Can build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteen miles of plain ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Streams, and all sorts of beasts of chase and game, and in the midst thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place.'

There are some who believe that a secret design may underlie the vagaries of Experience, a design fitfully revealed in rare flashes of illumination like fire in the opal. They may find matter for reflection in the mysterious dream atmosphere which had gathered round Kubla Khan's pleasure house centuries before Coleridge beheld it as a vision in a dream. *The General History of the World* by Rashîd ed-Dîn, a thirteenth-century account of Xanadu (Shang-tu) was not translated into any occidental language until years after Coleridge had dreamed his dream. It contains the following sentence: 'On the eastern side of that city a *karsi* or palace was built called Langtin after a plan which the Khan had seen in a dream and retained in his memory.' In an ancient tradition of which Coleridge can have had no knowledge, Kubla Khan's pleasure dome was decreed as the embodiment of a vision in a dream.

Professor Lowes' comment deserves quotation:

'Rashîd describes the building of Kubla's palace over "a certain lake encompassed with meadows near the city". The lake having been filled up and covered over and the palace built above it, "the water that was thus imprisoned in the bowels of the earth in course of time forced outlets in sundry places, and thus fountains were produced". That is a singular parallel with the subterranean waters of the poem. . . . The coincidence of the dream-built palace becomes more curious when we read in the Diary of J. Payne Collier: "we talked of dreams, the subject having been introduced by a recitation by Coleridge of some lines he had written years ago upon the building of a Dream-Palace by Kubla Khan". But obviously Collier's note represents merely a confused recollection.'

The fanciful may like to think that Coleridge as he sank to sleep may have met issuing from the Horn Gate the Khan's disembodied dream,

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but there was no need for that. Purchas's words had for the poet the magic of that strange song Tithonus heard Apollo sing 'when Ilion like a mist rose into towers'. For Coleridge, however, there was no misty moment of transition as when Apollo's song and lyre built up the walls of Troy. Instantaneously the stately pleasure dome rose up before him as a *thing*, to use his own expression, as a reality, and there it stands throughout the poem as the focal point of the picture.

A multitude of linked images rushed up with the vision of the palace, among them the memory of another place of pleasure of which the poet had read in another Elizabethan travel-book, *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. The Paradise of Aloadine, the Old Man of the Mountains, there described, was blended with Kubla's palace so closely that the two images could no more be separated than 'two dew-drops blended together on a bosom of a new-blown Rose', to use Coleridge's fairy language. Aloadine's Paradise was contrived for the delectation of his fanatic followers, the Assassins, and richly provided with Milk and Honey and 'Damosels skilfull in Songs and Instruments of Music'. The Old Man of the Mountains embellished Xanadu with 'a goodly garden furnished with the best trees', and the damsel with the dulcimer, the ominous youth with flashing eyes and floating hair, and the milk and honey of Paradise have all slipped into Kubla's precincts from Aloadine's Abbaye de Thélème.

These interlocked tales of 'far Edens of the purple East' were as closely knit by verbal and other associations to other distant beauty spots, which had their contributions to make to Kubla's pleasure-dome, among them an 'enchanted little Isle of Palms', far far away in Florida, painted in bewitching colours by Bartram in his 'Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida, etc., etc.' It was here that the incense-bearing trees originally blossomed and 'a serpentine rivulet meandering over the meadows' gave birth to the gardens bright with sinuous rills. Bartram excelled in descriptions of amazing fountains and three of them juxtaposed or rather superimposed coalesced into the mighty fountain with ceaseless turmoil seething, which flung up momentarily the sacred river.

The mysterious sacred river sweeps the reader to yet a third Continent, from Asia and America to Africa. The Nile is the most sacred of all rivers and Coleridge had explored its source under the guidance of James Bruce by way of that explorer's *Travels to Discover the Source*

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*of the Nile.* The fountains which Bruce discovered at the end of his journey become one with Bartram's American fountains and Bartram's meandering rivulet is metamorphosed into the sacred Nile which, Bruce says, 'makes so many sharp unnatural windings, that it differs from any other river I ever saw, making above twenty sharp angular peninsulas in the course of five miles'.

Bruce discovered his fountains in Abyssinia and that must be why Aloadine's Tartar damsel with the dulcimer has been transformed into an Abyssinian maid, though she is only a figure in a vision remembered by the dreamer. Mount Abora which, as Professor Lowes remarks, is unknown to any map since time began, is a beautiful example of a portmanteau word; for into it are packed the names of two of Bruce's rivers, Abola and Atbara, classically Astaboras, Purchas's Hill Amara, and Milton's Mount Amara,

'... where Abassin kings their issue guard,  
Mount Amara (though this by some supposed  
True Paradise) under the Ethiop line  
By Nilus's head. . . .'

Bruce again seems primarily responsible for the 'romantic chasm' and 'the cedarn cover' and a dramatic story of an Abyssinian king whose 'long hair floating all around his face' was caught, even as Absalom's was taken, in an oak, has been gathered into the complex picture of Aloadine's Assassin.

Next we are borne on the viewless wings of poesy from Abyssinia to far Cashmere. Maurice's *History of Hindostan*, with a minor side link locked into Quintus Curtius, Rennell's *Memoir of a Map of Hindostan*, and Bernier's *Voyage to Surat*, have all their contribution to make to Kubla Khan's cloud castle. 'The miracle of rare device, A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice' and the deep romantic chasm would never have come into existence quite as they did, if Coleridge had not read these books, nor would the shadow of the dome of pleasure have floated midway on the waves.

The problem of Alph, the perfect name for the father of all sacred rivers, of the caverns measureless to man and the sunless sea or lifeless ocean is pure delight. Of the four rivers that issued from Eden on the geographical authority of Genesis, it stood to reason that the Nile, the holiest of streams, must be one. Yet there was a slight geographical

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difficulty, since Eden was in Mesopotamia and the Nile was severed from it by the Red Sea and the deserts of Arabia. If indeed it watered the garden of the Earthly Paradise, it must flow through some subterranean and submarine tunnel, under the sea and under the land, from Asia to Africa. Here was a mystery to enchant the heart of the curious-minded and Professor Lowes enumerates an imposing list of authors, who by their speculations on the hidden journey of the Nile unwittingly took a share in the creation of *Kubla Khan*. Coleridge read every book he could lay hands on. Pausanias, Philostratus, Strabo, Pliny, Seneca, Lucan and many more bore Coleridge company in his pursuit of the sacred river through the dark mysterious passages under the land and under the sea, to say nothing of Burnet's 'Telluris Theoria Sacra' which he thought of translating into blank verse, Athanasius Kircher's 'Oedipus Aegyptiacus' and Herodotus, the father of history himself. They all bear witness to the sacred river's plunge into the depths, and the sunless sea which receives it is an essential part of Burnet's *Cosmogony*.

If Alph is not one of the sacred rivers of Eden, it ought to be. Once I hoped that I was on its track at Alfriston beneath the Sussex Downs, but alas! I was mistaken. Its origin is to be sought in a stream more storied than the Cuckmere. The burrowing Nile was only behaving exactly as the Alpheus does, when, as Shelley tells us and Coleridge knew as well as he, he pursues the nymph Arethusa from her couch in the snows in the Acro-Ceraunian mountains under the Ionian Sea to overtake her at last in Syracuse. Pausanias and Strabo both associate the Nile and Alpheus, and Seneca goes one step further, when he speaks of a hidden sea beneath the earth, a place without inhabitant. Valerius Flaccus in his *Argonauticon* bears witness to the association of the two rivers:

septem projectus in amnes  
Nilus et Hesperium veniens Alpheos in orbem.

"Alpheus", writes Professor Lowes happily, 'has been docked of its syllabic excess, and dream-fashioned as "Alph" into a quasi-equivalence with "Nile". . . . And none of us who has ever dreamed can doubt how exquisitely right and meet and natural "Alph" must in the dream have seemed—a name which sprang like a fountain from the inmost nature of the thing, rising up, like the dream-music, a "mingled measure" from the Alpheus and the Nile.'



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There is far more than this, but the reader must be left to find the rest for himself in Professor Lowes' fascinating volume. Enough has been said to illustrate the complex activities of the poet's mind, as he slumbered over *Purchas His Pilgrimage*. Not only did it blend and muster all these images, but simultaneously it imposed upon their word-symbols the order of an exceedingly difficult rhyming metre and a perfect harmony of sound. In this brief moment of his prime, Coleridge possessed a mind disciplined and skilled to marry, in Swinburne's phrase, 'an exquisite instinct to a subtle science of verse'.

'Indolence capable of energies,' Coleridge wrote beneath his self-portrait and Wordsworth bears witness that 'when he was intent on a new experiment in metre, the time and labour he bestowed was inconceivable'. Swinburne, that lord of poetic melody, called *Kubla Khan* 'the supreme model of music in our language' and its soul-beguiling harmonies are the direct result of the waking toil which Coleridge had lavished in attaining mastery of a new and infinitely subtle technique. 'He who can define it', said Swinburne 'could "unweave a rainbow"'. Coleridge had so organized his mind that the words seemed to fall of their own accord into the intricate pattern of his verse and through its texture was woven the golden thread of genius, that Ariadne's thread which guides into the Many something of the glory of the One. So we can say, again with Swinburne, 'we seem rapt into that Paradise revealed to Swedenborg, where music and colour and perfume were one; where you could hear the hues and see the harmonies of heaven'.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### FROM DANTE AND SANTA TERESA TO TIBET

. . . A kind of waking trance I have frequently had, quite up from my boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being; and this is not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life. This might be the state which St. Paul describes, 'Whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell.'—ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, *A Memoir by his Son*.

'St. Bonaventura says of visions, "nec faciunt sanctum nec ostendunt: alioquin Balaam sanctus esset, et asina, quae vidit Angelum."' DR. W. R. INGE, *Christian Mysticism*.

WE have travelled far from the Vision, wandering through time and the byways of waking Experience, lost memories and dream images. Enough has been said of the nature of Experience and mind, and the manner of its elaboration to lighten our inquiry into those visions and ecstasies which are so often taken for the Vision itself. Ego apprehends them vividly and directly like visual images of the outer world, but he can behold no more of the Mystic Union than its distorted shadow. Santa Teresa indeed holds that her 'arrobamientos', her ravishments, her transports, her exaltations, her spiritual flights, her ecstasies—she has a wealth of synonyms to express them—far transcend in spiritual value that indescribable act of devotion which she calls Union with God. She was a practical woman as well as a visionary and liked to be able to describe what she saw intelligibly.

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Union, she says, is the beginning, the middle and the end (meaning that it is complete in itself and always the same), and is within us. Ecstasies are on a higher level, because they pass through different stages and are of different kinds and degrees and produce both internal and external effects. In ecstasy, the soul seems to leave the body and there is no resisting the power that sucks up the soul as a cloud sucks up the moisture of the earth—and the cloud carries it away to the sky and shows it the kingdom of heaven. In Union, on the other hand, the soul remains in its domain and can sometimes struggle against it, though with great travail and agony. 'Let the Lord', she cries, 'explain this as He has explained the rest, for I am certain that if He had not taught me how to say something about it, I should not have known.'

We shall have to consider whether the Saint despite divine guidance may not be in danger of preferring the symbol to the reality. Plotinus (vi, 9, 3) tells us that if there enters into the Vision of the One extension, shape or mass, the manifold forms of Experience which belong not to the order of the One, but to the order of the Many, then we are not following the spirit and using our spiritual sight, but have taken our earthly senses as guide and our Vision is a fantasy expressed in terms of our sense Experience. Perhaps it is the artist in her as well as the practical woman speaking when she lays such emphasis on the outward and visible signs of the inward and spiritual grace. For the artist stands or falls by the form in which he moulds the symbols of his imagination, and the Saint was no mean poet. The artist pursues beauty and beauty alone, and beauty flashes up like a spark struck by the steel of his spirit from the flint of the material world or rather as one of the sparks scattered under the hammer of God from that anvil of the universe on which Experience is beaten into shape. The artist as such is little concerned with the nature of the One or its revelation in memory. The rules of its perfection which transcend intellect inform his medium in the Many and his very life depends on the work of art which they create, time shaped in the mould of the eternal.

Santa Teresa was primarily a practical mystic, Martha in her Reform of the Carmelite Order and Mary in her Union with God, and only incidentally an artist. Dante Alighieri was both artist and mystic and a glance at the work of his supreme genius may throw some light on her visions. Poor Coleridge could never quite catch the Vision in his arms, though he sought it high and low, but once or twice in his tragic

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life he enriched the world with a perfect work of art. Kubla Khan's palace might be no more than an idle fancy, but Coleridge's dream set its gossamer phantom sparkling for ever with the dew and sunlight of eternal beauty. The whole universe from Earth to Heaven and Hell and from Man to God, the all-inclusive philosophy of revealed religion—no weightier subject can inspire a poet than that which formed the design of the *Divina Commedia* and Dante's journey reached its culmination in the Vision of God.

For all his bitterness and hatreds, it was his boyish love for Beatrice, sublimated by sorrow into the most ethereal of spiritual romances, that winged his genius on its flight in the *Divina Commedia* 'to tell of her what had never been told of other lady'. It happened to Dante as to many another less gifted mortal that half-way through the journey of life he found that the path he had been following had come to an end and that he was lost in a trackless forest. How he had come to that pass 'bitter almost as death', he could not say, so full of sleep was he when he left the right way. He began to take heart of grace, when the sun which leads men straight on every road shone from above and with its light came love, the love which moved Beatrice to send Virgil to his aid and which was to guide him through the courts of heaven. Light and Love shine for every mystic as guiding stars.

Like Santa Teresa, the Florentine was divinely ravished into another world.

'O immaginativa, che ne rube  
tal volta sì di fuor, ch'uom non s'accorge,  
perchè d'intorno suonin mille tube,  
chi muove te, se'l senso non ti porge?  
muoveti lume, che nel ciel s'informa,  
per sè, o per voler che giù lo scorge.'

'Imagination, who dost sometimes so ravish us that though a thousand trumps were sounding round us, we should not mark them; who moves thee when thou art unstirred by sense? Thou art moved by light from heaven, self-created or sent down to us by the Will Divine.'

Imagination swept Dante away on a long pilgrimage, but at last the nightmares of Hell and the dreams of Purgatory gave place to the visions of Paradise and he knows that even his mastery of words and

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images is powerless to express their mystery. As Santa Teresa says, the spiritual language is so difficult.

'... vidi cose che ridire  
nè sa, nè può qual di lassù discende,  
Perchè appressando sè al suo desire,  
nostro intellecto si profonda tanto,  
che la memoria retro non può ire.'

'I beheld things which one who returns from on high hath neither power nor knowledge to tell, because our understanding drawing near to its desire reaches such depths that memory cannot follow it.'

Dante is borne through the seven spheres of heaven in a series of visions which like Santa Teresa's grow steadily more intense in spiritual meaning and with which his poetic imagery can still keep pace. At last on the Mystic Rose formed of all the saints and chivalry of heaven, he pours out the full wealth of his imagination and words can go no further. Yet one last thing remains, the greatest of all, the Beatific Vision, the Vision of God, and of that Dante can say little more than a man who has been gazing at the sun, of his bewilderment.

'Chè la mia vista, venendo sincera,  
e più e più intrava per lo raggio  
de l'alta luce che da sè è vera.  
Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio  
che 'l parlar nostro, ch'a tal vista cade,  
e cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio.  
Qual è colui che somniando vede,  
che dopo il sogno la passione impressa  
rimane, e l'altro a la mente non riede,  
cotal son io, chè quasi tutta cessa  
mia visione, ed ancor mi distilla  
nel core il dolce che nacque da essa.'

'For my sight as it grew clearer sank ever more deeply into the rays of the Light Sublime which is the Truth of Truths. Thenceforth my vision transcended our speech which has no words to tell it, and memory fails before its overwhelming wonder. As one who dreams and when the dream is past, still holds the imprint of its emotion, though the mind cannot recover its substance, even so am I: my Vision all but

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fades away, yet still the sweetness born from it pervades my heart.'

As he approaches the object of all Desire, the poet feels desire die within him. It is that death to memory which leaves Ego free from the trammels of Experience and which finds a place in every narrative of the Vision. A single simile serves to adumbrate in the philosophical language of the day the nature of the One.

'Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,  
legato con amore in un volume,  
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna;  
sustanze e accidenti e lor costume,  
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo  
che ciò ch'è dico è un semplice lume.'

'In its depth I saw united, bound by love in a single volume, the leaves that are scattered unbound through the universe, substance and accident and their laws, so fused together that they formed a single light.'

The *Divina Commedia* culminates in the glory which cannot be expressed in memory, let alone in words, but a poet cannot pass over the climax of his story in silence. As Dante gazes into the changeless simplicity of the Light of God, it is in himself, in his mind, as he is careful to point out, that the mystic symbols of the Trinity seem to take shape, the three circles of three colours and one content, one of them reflected by the other as if a rainbow were reflecting a rainbow, and the third like flame proceeding from them both. Then within the circle of reflected radiance, the straining eyes of his soul discern or seem to discern the likeness of a Man, the emblem of the most Sacred Humanity. So tenuous and transparent is the imagery thrown by Dante's theology over the naked purity of the Vision. Nothing more material than these almost imperceptible symbols must obscure the Light of that ineffable mystery, the One.

'O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,  
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta  
ed intendente, te ami ed arridi.'

'O Light eternal who abidest in thyself alone and alone knowest thyself, and self-known and self-knowing, dost love and smile upon thyself.'

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Desire has failed and been born again, its fulfilment, the Vision of God is over and there remains behind the peace which passes all understanding, the supreme submission to the Law of Love.

'A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;  
ma già volgeva il mio disio e il velle  
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,  
l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.'

'Here power failed to my lofty vision; but already my desire and will were moving like a wheel that turns evenly and truly, moved by the love that moves the sun and all the stars.'

For Santa Teresa, the most Holy Trinity takes on a more precise and substantial form than for the poet, in that intellectual vision (the highest order of all visions) of which she writes in the Seventh and Inmost Mansion of *The Castle of the Soul*. When the scales have been removed from the eyes of the soul, God reveals all three Persons of the Godhead, separate and distinct, yet one Substance, one Power, one Wisdom, one God, even as Athanasius defined them, and heralded by a blaze of radiance like a cloud of brightest light. All three Persons talk together and the soul both hears and understands the words of our Lord in the Gospel that He and His Father and the Holy Ghost come to dwell with the soul which loves Him and keeps His commandments.

Devout Catholic as Dante was, the images of his theology fade into shadowy abstractions beneath the fierce blaze of the light of the One. The One had been reflected in the Saint's Experience, but she was no philosopher and womanlike clung to the symbols and images that clustered round its memory, more tangible to the soul than Dante's all-inclusive Light. Thus she ranks as the highest of her visions the appearance of the most Sacred Humanity lying in the bosom of the Father and a glimpse of the Divinity in the likeness of a huge bright diamond whose transparency contains the universe. The Saint's diamond recalls Plotinus's comparison of the universe to a vast transparent sphere containing the All (v, 8, 9).

In Union with God Santa Teresa was at one with all the mystics of the world. The visions which translated this Union into Experience found their material in the manners and traditions of her age and country and in her own character and upbringing. The reader will find all these factors in her life admirably set out and weighed in *The Eagle*

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*and the Dove*, by V. Sackville-West. Spain has always been a land of extremes and never more so than in the sixteenth century. The crusade against the infidel in his own land was still fresh in the Spaniard's mind and the wonders of the New World had attuned him to any miracle. In the stronghold of the Catholic Faith, that vast stern edifice like the Escorial built upon the Scriptures and the wisdom of the Fathers, there was no clear-cut dividing line between the visible and the invisible world. Things unseen were more real than things seen; the soul was all; the body nothing. The long-drawn-out struggle against the Moor was over, but there had been neither armistice nor peace in that spiritual warfare which was being waged between God and the Devil all round Santa Teresa and her contemporaries with human souls as the gages of victory. The gates of Hell were close at hand, ready to open and swallow up the unhappy prisoners, the sinful victims of the Evil One's wiles, though Christ and all the chivalry of Heaven were battling to save mankind.

Teresa lived a life of constant suffering and how far her infirmities which were powerless to check the activities of her mind and body were due to mental or physical causes is a question for the doctor and psychologist. That there was intense conflict in her mind is shown by her vain endeavours to throw off the visions that were at once her torture and her joy, and her soul and body waged war on one another as relentlessly as God and the Evil One. She was born to see visions and alternate between the depths of the darkest despair and the heights of heavenly rapture. We know the secrets of her inmost heart almost as her confessor knew them and behind all her confessions lies one terrible disability. The curse of the fear of Hell lay heavy upon her. She could laugh at the Inquisition and all its tortures and talk to the king as a noble lady should, but that terror drove her from the world, long tormented her devotions and nearly split her soul in two. It was well that the Faith which implanted this terror in the mind of a child provided in the end an antidote—prayer and the outward symbols of religion made effective by the inward grace of the love of Christ.

Inevitably the matter of her visions was drawn from those images of orthodox religion which composed so great a part of her Experience, but it may not be fanciful to detect in the form imposed upon them by her mind a secular influence<sup>1</sup>—particularly in the days when she was

<sup>1</sup> 'It would be very interesting to trace the influence of the chivalric idea on religious Mysticism.'—Dr. W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism*.



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driven nearly mad by doubt as to whether they came from God or were the creation of the Devil. Her mother was given to the reading of chivalresque romances, the thrillers of the day, and as a young girl, Teresa was devoured with such a passion for this light literature, as it was then considered, that she was never happy unless she had a new novel to read. They were the rage of the generation, forerunners of our best sellers, but to the modern reader these tedious productions which pile extravagance on extravagance in a world of knight-errants, distressed damsels, giants, enchanters and Castles Dangerous have only one excuse. Amadis of Gaul, Palmerin of England and all their tribe would long ago have been forgotten, if their high-flown nonsense had not made Cervantes laugh; what began in contemptuous laughter ended in the immortal story profoundly wise, tender and eternally true of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

These tales cannot but have left their mark on the impressionable fabric of a child's mind and nothing could be more congenial to dreams and visions than their atmosphere of romantic fantasy. In her mind the heroes and villains of religion automatically take the place of the heroes and villains of fairyland. For the wicked enchanters and giants, there is the Devil himself and demons galore, and who was ever more truly a distressed damsel than Teresa herself? What castle more perilous than the Castle of the Soul? If a Squire was needed, there were always the angels who so often bore her company.

There is a curious hint of pagan mythology in that angel of Crashaw's Flaming Heart who visited her several times as the messenger of Divine Love and who might belong to that world in which Love gave Dante's burning heart to Beatrice to eat. He was not tall, but little of stature and very beautiful. His face was ablaze with fire and he must have been an angel of high rank, for such angels seem all fire. Teresa thought that he was a Cherub, but did not feel sure, as there were so many degrees in the celestial hierarchy. Her spiritual advisers knew better; this was no mere Cherub, an angel of the second order, but a Seraph of the highest degree of all. And the Church clenched the matter by bestowing on the Saint the title of Seraphic Mother.

This Seraph, as we now know him to be, carried a long golden dart tipped with fire and several times plunged it into her heart, until it reached her very vitals. When he drew it out, he seemed to draw them out with it and left her consumed with the burning love of God. So

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exquisite was the pain that she could not refrain from moaning and so surpassing the sweetness of this very great pain that there was no desire to be rid of it nor could the soul be content with anything less than God. Love, it seems, is bitter-sweet both in heaven and on earth—and that indeed is in a sense our interpretation of the Vision.

Christ, the Arch-Knight-Errant, was always watching over her, though like the knight-errants of the novels he was not always there when he was wanted. Her vision of Hell might be the dungeon of Giant Despair. Hell is approached by a long narrow passage, very low, dark and stifling, the ground deep in mire and water, full of horrible vermin and exhaling a pestilential stink. At the end of the passage, there was a sort of cupboard hollowed out in the wall and there she saw herself placed. She was alone in that vile place, in utter darkness, without hope of comfort, unable to sit or lie down, with the very walls closing in to suffocate her. Here she suffered for an instant the torments of the damned, spiritual torture which made all earthly suffering, the fires of the Inquisition, the tearing of the flesh with the Devil's red-hot pincers, the merest trifle.

Christian ascetics and contemplatives have always been peculiarly exposed to the assaults of the Evil One and his hosts, as the reader of Anatole France's *Thaïs* will remember, and Santa Teresa was no exception. We need not dwell on the abominable figure with a horrible mouth who threatened her, the frightful little negro who attacked her, the demon who sat on her prayer book and all the other devils who plagued and frightened her. They were real, terribly real to her, and few of her contemporaries would have thought of disputing their objective reality. We, however, must classify them with Piranesi's nightmares and those dreams in which the uncontrolled mind translates into hideous and fearful images its own disorder and the troubles of the body. She possessed as vivid a power of visual imagery as Coleridge and the circumstances of her daily life as well as her temperament were continually carrying her into that half-world where fantasies, escaping from their appointed place within the mind, seem to set up for themselves an independent existence.

It was before her happier visions had begun that these hellish phantoms tormented her. She was well accustomed to hearing voices which seemed to her divine, but friends whom she respected for their piety and learning were sure that the devil was in them too. One day, how-

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ever, she heard a voice that carried conviction to her inmost heart: 'Be not afraid, my daughter. I AM and I will not desert thee. Fear not.' From that moment she lost all fear of the apparitions of evil and, crucifix in hand, was ready to challenge whole armies of them and shoo them away. They occasionally returned to persecute her, but in the end they were more afraid of her than she of them.

The frontal attack of the Evil One had been defeated, but his cunning knew no bounds and more than ever she must be on her guard. Visions had now begun to come to her, visions of Christ and Heaven; was it possible that they were born from the subtle treachery of the Eternal Foe? She had learnt from St. Paul and St. Augustine that the devil may put on the shape of an angel of light—was he not Lucifer?—and she had a shrewd suspicion that he had tried to deceive her two or three times by daring to appear in the likeness of Christ. What can a man do if he must suspect his loveliest thoughts and highest aspirations of being inventions of the devil? Poor Paphnuce in *Thaïs*, after mortifying his flesh for months and years, perched miserably on the top of a pillar, all to save his soul, discovered that he had lost salvation by succumbing to a temptation from Hell.

The Mystic Union in itself is unassailable; for nothing that is indescribable and incommunicable is open to criticism. All interpretations of the Vision are subject to doubt and disagreement and the Saint's visions were as much an attempt to express it in terms of Experience as Dante's *Paradiso* or the writer's humble efforts. She could not be aware of their true purpose and perforce treasured them beyond measure as confirmation of the Faith, but in that very fact lay their weakness. Visions may confirm orthodoxy which of necessity asks for no confirmation, but they are also capable of giving birth to a heresy. No wonder that the wisdom of the Church submits them to long and close examination and that Teresa was kept in suspense for years, before her spiritual advisers made up their minds.

Her visions centre round Christ, the divine pattern of chivalry, just as all Dante's dreams of Paradise spring from his love for Beatrice, 'the passion that left the earth to lose itself in the sky'. At first she knew that He was beside her, though her soul could neither see nor hear nor touch Him—as though the sacred knight-errant had donned the cap of invisibility. It was like being in a dark room with another person and knowing that he is there, though he gives no sign. By degrees the

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Presence took clearer and clearer shape and one day, when she was praying, the Lord deigned to show her His hands, hands of marvellous beauty. A few days later, she beheld the loveliness of the divine countenance. She was surprised that He revealed Himself in this way, little by little, but she supposed that it must be to spare her mortal weakness. Though she could watch the beauty and sweetness of His mouth, as He talked with her, she could never see the colour of His eyes nor determine His stature, though she longed to do so; for the vision vanished if she tried to examine its details too closely, as is the way of visions. Plotinus (v, 8, 11) warns the seer of the Vision against losing it by trying to see too much. So Psyche lost her Cupid, trying to see her love as well as touch and hear.

So she talked to God and God to her and the burden of His words was nearly always, 'Be brave'. In the beginning, she had communed with Him in the spoken words of prayer, but as she drew nearer to Him, no spoken words were needed, not even whispers, but only a movement of the lips. At last her soul learnt to converse with Christ as they converse in Heaven, as two persons who are very fond of one another and understand one another, as two lovers gazing into one another's eyes. After such a glimpse of private intimacy with God, the visions of the Godhead in all its glory come almost as an anticlimax.

It is a far cry in space and time from sixteenth-century Spain to eighth-century Tibet and from Santa Teresa's religion to Tibetan Buddhism, but the journey is worth the making; for nowhere shall we find a more satisfactory theory of visions, combining full comprehension of the Mystic Union with a psychological insight which was unknown in the West until this century, than in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, which is said to have been first committed to writing some twelve hundred years ago. The translation by Lama Kazi Dawa-Sandup, edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz with a valuable commentary, is published by the Oxford University Press.

The barbaric fantasies of Tibet seem to have little in common with the delicate tracery of Santa Teresa's spiritual images, but they are both composed of the same material, Experience, though that Experience is countless miles apart in either case, and can only be interpreted in the light of that Mystic Union with which the Eastern Buddhist is far more closely acquainted than the average Western psychologist. As has been said, it is as difficult for the wisdom of the

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East to blend with that of the West as for oil and vinegar to mix and, approaching the Vision from a Western standpoint, I have made scanty reference to the teachings of the Eastern religions, but in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* we find an analysis of the mind which is in the closest conformity with the theories of the up-to-date Western psycho-analyst.

No answer has ever been found to Plato's argument in the *Phædo* that it is scarcely possible for a philosopher to believe that the soul can survive death, if it only came into existence at birth, apart from the tremendous pronouncement on the immortality of the gods, made by the Great Craftsman, God of Gods, in the thirteenth chapter of the *Timæus*, quoted on page 218. An immortality which runs in only one direction seems a highly unphilosophical idea; for what has no end can surely have no beginning. If we are to live after death, we must have lived before birth. The doctrine of re-birth or re-incarnation meets this difficulty and forms one of the principal tenets of Buddhism and Brahmanism as it did of Pythagoreanism. If, when a man dies, he is to be born again, presumably some time must elapse between his death and re-birth, and a Buddhist scripture, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is concerned with what happens to him in this intermediate state called the Bardo and what he can do betwixt death and life to attain eternal bliss.

The duties of a Tibetan's spiritual adviser do not end with the death of a member of his flock. His counsel can still reach his disciple in the ghostly borderland of the Bardo between one life and another, and *The Book of the Dead* preserves the ancient formulæ and prayers which the lama must repeat again and again—salvation depends on their penetrating to the dead man's understanding—first into the corpse's ear and then into the ear of an effigy for the mystic period of nine and forty days. A crude and primitive symbolism it may seem to the Western mind, but there lies behind it a truth which is universal.

The Buddhist sees the supreme goal of life and death in Nirvana, liberation from the ever-recurring cycle of birth and death with their changes and chances and the return of Ego to his home in the timeless perfection of the One. The end of life is the denial of life—a conclusion which our interpretation of the Vision disputes—though this complete and final liberation from Experience must not be understood as annihilation, but as absorption into pure Consciousness. In the main, redemption depends on Experience, on that chain of actions and feel-

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ings good and ill which bear in themselves the seeds of reward and punishment, *karma* which makes a man what he is in the world of the Many, but the lama tries to open to the wanderer in the Bardo one of those short cuts, dear to the heart of the priest all the world over, which may enable him to escape to some extent from the fatal consequences of his evil deeds in countless existences that drag him back to time and mortality. If only he can recognize the Truth and attain thereby Enlightenment, his freedom is assured.

The Bardo is divided by our liturgy into three distinct states: the first, the Bardo of the Dying Moments, when the dead man is, as it were, in a trance and does not know that he is dead; the second, the Bardo of Experience, when he awakes to the knowledge that he is dead and all the memories of his past life rise before him in a phantasmagoria of terrific visions; the third, the Bardo of Rebirth, when he is faced with the problems of rebirth and the choice of a new and satisfactory body. We shall confine our attention to the first two transition states; the third would carry us too far afield and the problems of one life and death are complicated enough without the additional perplexity of rebirth.

I think it probable that these Tibetan ideas of death arose from the study of its twin brother, sleep. The reader will remember that on the basis of a scientific graph provided by experiments we distinguished between three degrees of sleep. The first, very near the waking level, was the stage of the hypnagogic images, the ocular spectra, which might be taken to correspond with the hallucinations that may precede death. *The Book of the Dead* is not concerned with these, as its intercessions only begin with the actual moment of death. The second stage we called the plunge into Oblivion, that headlong dive into the very depths of sleep, when Ego returns to pure Consciousness and can bring back with him no memory to Experience. The Bardo of the Moments of Death offers an exact parallel to this stage of sleep; for in it, the dead man's Ego is entirely lost to all Experience in the Clear Light of Reality.

The sleeper passes from Oblivion to the more prolonged stage of dreaming in which the images of his Experience take shape and appear before him, and that is exactly what happens to the Ego of the departed, when he enters the Bardo of Experience where all his memories rise up against him in visions and apparitions.

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All the funeral offices are directed to one end, the dead man's recognition of reality, Consciousness, or that Enlightenment which is liberation from all Experience and entry into eternal bliss. When the lama calls upon the naked Ego, stripped of his Experience, who has just left the earth and entered the second Bardo, to recognize the Clear Light of Consciousness, he is raising a very difficult problem. He is exhorting Ego to be conscious of Consciousness, and Consciousness of Consciousness implies an infinite series of Consciousnesses—Mr. Dunne's Infinite Regress again—and any mathematical series is a negation of the unity of the One. This is one more example of the confusion of Consciousness and Awareness. The lama tries to endow Ego in a state of pure Consciousness and complete Union with the One, that is comprehension of himself and himself alone, with the faculty of Awareness or as he terms it intellect, which exists only in relation to the Many and in the apprehension of non-Ego. Ego can never be directly aware of Consciousness which cannot enter his Experience except as a contradiction in terms. Ego cannot think Ego.

The dead man is told at the moment of his departure:

'Thou art about to experience it (the Clear Light of Consciousness) in its reality in the Bardo, wherein all things are like the void and cloudless sky, and the naked spotless intellect is like unto a transparent vacuum without circumference or centre. At this moment know thou thyself and abide in that state.'

And later, when breathing has entirely ceased and the symptoms of death have passed:

'Now thou art experiencing the Radiance of the Clear Light of Pure Reality. Recognize it, O nobly-born, thy present intellect in real nature void, not formed of anything as regards characteristics or colour, naturally void, is the very Reality, the All-Good.'

The identification of Consciousness with Awareness leads to nihilism. 'The transparent vacuum without circumference or centre' is one way of expressing nothing: it implies the disappearance of all Experience, but not the nothingness of Ego; for it is absurd to call on nothing to know itself. The field of Awareness has been blotted out, but Consciousness remains and Ego is, as he always is by virtue of his participation in the nature of the One, at once subject and object. As we interpret the Vision, Ego's failure to escape from Experience into Consciousness, from the Many into the One, and to abide for ever in timeless perfec-

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tion arises, not from any inability to grasp the reality of Consciousness, either in life or death or between death and life, but from the essence of his own Being and the fundamental law of God, life and the universe.

There are two phases of the Bardo of the Moments of Death and in the second the radiance of the Clear Light begins to be dimmed by the mists and faint images of Experience which is beginning to gather again. The following passage seems to refer to this later phase and prepares the way for the Bardo of Experience.

'O nobly-born, when thy body and mind were separating, thou must have experienced a glimpse of the Pure Truth, subtle, sparkling, bright, glorious, and radiantly awesome, in appearance like a mirage moving across a landscape in spring-time in one continuous stream of vibrations. Be not daunted thereby, not terrified, nor awed. That is the radiance of thine own true nature. Recognize it.

'From the midst of that radiance, the natural sound of reality, reverberating like a thousand thunders simultaneously sounding, will come. That is the natural sound of thine own real self. Be not daunted thereby, nor terrified, nor awed.'

It is a commonplace in the West that people brought to the threshold of death, in particular those on the point of drowning, may see in a flash the whole of their life spread out before them. Scientists throw doubt upon such stories as arising from an illusion, but surely this illusion of an illusion would be a curious phantom. They deny that there is any remarkable mental rapidity in dreams, but that is beside the question, as simultaneity implies rest not motion. De Quincey tells this story of his mother.

'Having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for the assistance which reached her at the last critical moment, she saw in a moment her whole life, clothed in its forgotten incidents, arrayed before her as in a mirror, not successively, but simultaneously; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part. This from some opium experiences, I can believe.'

The drowning English child saw her whole life spread out before her in a single panorama. The Tibetan in the Bardo of Experience sees his whole nature, his virtues and vices, all that he has done for good and ill, transformed into elaborate visions, ranging from dreams radiant and beautiful to the most hideous and fearsome of nightmares, sweep



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past his ghostly eyes in tremendous pageantry. Though he has put off his earthly body, he is now clothed in a radiant body formed of his thoughts, habits and desires, of his Experience in fact, which sprang into existence 'like a trout leaping forth from water', and once more there are objects to be presented to his reawakened Awareness. All the gods of his Pantheon bear down upon him in an unending procession. It is headed by the Beneficent and Peaceful Deities, blazing with the splendour of the Shekinah.

In their mercy, they have come in shapes of reasonable size, neither too big nor too small for human understanding. Take one of them:

'Then, from the Central Realm, called the Spreading Forth of the Seed, the Bhagavan Vairochana, white in colour, and seated upon a lion throne, bearing an eight-spoked wheel in his hand and embraced by the Mother of the Space of Heaven, will manifest himself to thee.'

Still the lama insists in his exhortations.

'These forty-two perfectly endowed deities, issuing from within thy heart, being the products of thine own pure love, will come to shine. They come from within the four divisions of the heart, which, including the centre, make the five directions. They issue from within there and shine upon thee. The deities, too, are not come from somewhere else: they exist from eternity within the faculties of thine own intellect. Know them to be of that nature.'

These god-forms pass and the coming of the Blood-Drinking Wrathful Deities is heralded by the Knowledge-Holding Deities who carry a crescent knife and a human skull filled with human blood. They are sufficiently alarming of themselves and are surrounded by a motley crowd:

'Heroes, heroines, celestial warriors, and faith-protecting deities, male and female, each bedecked with the six bone ornaments, having drums and thigh-bone trumpets, skull timbrels, banners of gigantic human hides, human-hide canopies, human-hide bannerettes, fumes of human-fat incense, and innumerable kinds of musical instruments, filling with music the whole world systems and causing them to vibrate, to quake and tremble with sounds so mighty as to daze one's brain, and dancing various measures, will come to receive the faithful and punish the unfaithful.'

There will come reverberations of a thousand thunders, cries of 'Slay, slay', and words of power, and Ego must not fear or flee, but

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know that all these Himalayan storms and earthquakes, all this phantasmagoria of fear, are no more than his own thoughts.

The climax comes with the Blood-Drinking Wrathful Deities, fifty-eight of them, flame-haloed and provided with a superabundance of faces, hands and feet. Yet they are only the Peate Deities under another aspect and all that Ego has to do is to recognize them as his own thought-forms and they will vanish and he be carried into the beatitude of the Clear Light of Reality. If a person were to see a stuffed lion skin and take it for a real lion, he would be frightened, but when he knew it was only a skin he would lose his fear. So when the Blood-Drinking Deities, huge of proportions with enormous limbs, are known as what they are, terror vanishes and enlightenment is attained.

The worst of Western nightmares must yield in frightfulness to the three phantom-bodies of the Lord of Death. The largest equals the firmament in stature; the second is as big as Mount Meru, the centre of the Buddhist cosmogony, rising 80,000 feet above the Enchanted Central Ocean and extending 80,000 feet below its surface; the third is only eighteen times as big as a man.

'They come having their upper teeth biting the nether lip; their eyes glassy; their hair tied upon the top of the head; big-bellied, narrow-waisted; holding a recording tablet in the hand; giving utterance from their mouth to sounds of "Strike! slay!", licking human brains, drinking blood, tearing heads from corpses, tearing out hearts; thus will they come filling the worlds.'

Even these giants such as no knight-errant ever overthrew are exorcized when they are known as mere figments of the mind and so liberation is achieved.

In such wise the ancient Tibetan ritual of death passes judgment on Gods and Devils alike, and dematerializes the worlds of Heaven and Hell together with the joys of the blessed and the torments of the damned into images of thoughts and feelings more tenuous and fragile than the bursting soap bubble. Good is its own reward and evil its own punishment, and willy-nilly (with a hinted prospect of priestly intervention) Ego must live and die and live again, bound by the consequences of his own acts and character, until the scales fall from his eyes and he recognizes that everything except Consciousness, even the reflection of Consciousness in his own mind, is illusion. 'I myself am Heaven and Hell.'

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'Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd desire,  
And Hell the shadow from a soul on fire.'

Yet how different the background of this apparent agreement between Tibet and Persia. For Fitzgerald-Omar, heaven with its promise of eternal bliss and hell with its threat of eternal pain are unsubstantial shadows thrown for a moment on the empty void, and, when the Lantern-Show is over, there is left nothing. For the Tibetan, all visions, Experience itself, are no more than apparitions flitting before the One Reality and obscuring its view, and when they are scattered for the illusions they are, there remains 'the white radiance of eternity', the Clear Light of Consciousness which is the central core of all life.

Santa Teresa held fast to the memory of Union with the One and the rapture it left behind, but she could not shatter its symbols, those lovely dreams in which she walked and talked with God and on which the Church set the seal of orthodox reality. The beauty of her visions cannot be dissipated by dissolving them into their component parts, the elemental desires and frustrations of psychology, any more than the sublimity of a masterpiece of art can be demonstrated by grinding it to powder. They were manifestations of her own thoughts and feelings, but they possess the essential truth of expressing in the Many something of the perfection of the One—that supreme quality of art bequeathed to the West by the Hellenic spirit.

The Tibetan conceptions of the After-World, between death and life, offer a strange contrast to the delicacy and refinement of the Saint's imagery with the extravagance of their barbaric symbolism. The gods of the Tibetan Pantheon, beneficent or maleficent, dwell in the depths of the lost primeval memories which may still work such havoc in modern life. It is hard to reconcile their primitive savagery with the lofty wisdom and power of abstract thought, which so many centuries ago recognized them for what they were and consigned them to their proper place in the imaginings of the human heart.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MIRACLES AND PROPHECY

The marvellous too is very much like a snowball; it grows as it rolls downward, till the little nucleus of truth which began its descent from the summit is hidden in the accumulation of super-induced hyperbole.—T. L. PEACOCK, *The Four Ages of Poetry*.

**T**he Vision breaks into life as a miracle suddenly interrupting and diverting the normal stream of Experience, and it is natural that the miracle within should turn attention for a moment at least to the records of external events, described as miraculous, which appear as sudden breaches of what we regard as the infrangible laws of Nature. As has been said, there are no grounds for looking upon the Vision as a reward of exceptional virtue, though it usually implies some interest in things unseen, but there does seem to be a definite association between saintliness and the miracles of the external world. Miss Sackville-West, in the book quoted above, mentions many examples of well-attested miracles performed by the Catholic Saints, and the history of Christianity is packed with them. In the East even more amazing miracles are recounted and believed. Where all phenomena are held to be illusion, there can be little difficulty in believing that laws to which the Western mind allows no exceptions should be subject to unaccountable infractions and violent upheavals.

People usually believe what they want to believe. The scientist is as anxious to discredit a miracle which upsets his cosmos as many less matter-of-fact folk are eager to confirm it. In this question, the Western mystic will, I think, be wise to adopt the attitude of Gallio who cared for none of these things. The miracle of the inner life is enough for him, though he need not be unduly credulous or unduly sceptical. In the beginning of life, the power of the One must come directly into contact with the physical world; for there is as yet no intermediate Experience and the organism to gather it is in the making. If sometimes at a later stage in the cycle of life, the vital energy short-circuits the

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organization of mind and body through which it normally operates, extremely odd and unexpected things are likely to happen; for we can set no limit to the forces it can command. A sudden zigzag in the course of the 'now' is not inconceivable.

It is easy to recognize the possibility of miracles, but hard to look upon them as matters of serious importance. In our time and world, at any rate, events do not seem to proceed in disjointed fits and starts. Possibly miracles possess great value for those who perform them, but the looker-on can draw no useful conclusions from spasmodic exceptions to natural law; if he could, they would become examples of a law previously unrecognized and would cease to be miracles. It is well to have a faith capable of removing mountains, but the moving of mountains seems an unprofitable occupation.

The wicked and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign is always with us and too many seekers after spiritual truth crave for material proof of the immaterial. It is the weakness of the miracle that it proves nothing, and even if it could, its actual happening, however well-attested, is always open to doubt and scepticism, for it cannot be repeated in the laboratory. There are marvels and to spare in Experience—in the heart—which are beyond all questioning, but the miracles of which we are speaking are referred to the physical world, in which no absolute certainty is possible, even through the ceaseless repetition of controlled experiments. Moreover, the intangible cannot be proved by the tangible, nor the invisible by the visible. As Coleridge says, in a beautiful and delicate simile,

'If a man could pass through Paradise in a dream; and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found the flower in his hand when he awoke—Ay! and what then? Even a flower of Paradise could not blossom in the heart.'

Setting aside the major miracles which, even before they were exposed to the withering glance of science, were few and far between, though they loom large in the Hagiology, we find that the most materially-minded notice, from time to time, inexplicable incidents, strange coincidences, through which, as through chinks in the commonplace Experience of everyday life, they catch glimpses of some alarming universe outside the comfortable solid world to which they cling, and which vaguely stir within them lost superstitious memories. It was this uneasiness which Mr. A. E. W. Mason's Ricardo felt when in *The*

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*Prisoner in the Opal* he was brought face to face with the hideous mysteries of the Black Mass and Devil Worship.

'I saw it (the world) as a vast opal inside which I stood—an opal luminously opaque, so that I was dimly aware of another world outside mine, terrible and alarming to the prisoner in the opal. It was what is called a fire opal, for every now and then, a streak of crimson, bright as the flash of a rifle on a dark night, shot through the twilight which enclosed me. And all the while I felt that the ground underneath my feet was dangerously brittle just as an opal is brittle.'

These phenomena which sometimes seem to point to a mysterious sixth sense, second sight as they say, may be worth consideration on the chance that they may throw some light on the orderliness of things and on the hidden purpose of the universe. Spiritual healing has been removed by Psychology from the category of the miraculous to that of scientific medicine. It is generally agreed that the influence of mind on matter is so great that much pain can be partially or totally suppressed not only by hypnotism, but by the sufferer's mental effort, but we have also learned that this denial of pain may be a dangerous lie. Pain is a useful warning and its violent suppression may be perilous to the integrity of the mind. It is, when not too intense, easy to overcome if the mind can be concentrated on the task. I found by experience that Dr. Coué's formula would hold neuralgia in abeyance and it only lost its power when I realized that it was suppressing a symptom and not touching the physical cause of the pain.

Ghosts may safely be left to the Society for Psychical Research in full confidence that no final solution of the problem will ever be reached. There will always be some people who see ghosts and believe in them and others who do not, and what it is that the one class sees and the other fails to perceive will ever be open to debate. I should doubt if ever ghost was seen so clearly as Coleridge saw Kubla Khan's dream. As for the summoning of the spirits of the dead, the only trials of spiritualism that I have made left me with an impression of humbug and vulgar sentimentality. No doubt I was unlucky, but I was not tempted to further exploration of a shadowy world controlled by imbeciles and savages. Sorrow and bereavement must be bravely faced as conditions of mortal life, and those who try to shirk the burden, however deserving they may be of pity, are liable to become the prey of the unscrupulous.

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Doubtless the medium's trance may be as genuine as the contemplative's detachment from earth and he may see and hear things for which he cannot account—as we all do at times—but it is madness to take his revelations at their face value, when the wisest and most beautiful visions must be dissolved into the images of the dreaming mind. All our memories may be, and probably are, intertwined with those of others living and dead, but they are inextricably woven together and there is no sorting out the strands of our Experience, as Professor Lowes was able to disentangle the elements of Coleridge's imagery. There is evidence of telepathy, direct communication between mind and mind, though it seems a fitful and precarious occurrence. Can a medium's mind encounter and take into itself images and symbols from the minds of the dead? It is conceivable, but even so they must be overlaid at once with other memories scarcely to be distinguished from them, and are no more to be taken literally than those fleeting ocular spectra on the road to sleep. Deliberate fraud apart, the openings for self-deception are boundless.

Since the witch of Endor, and long before, mankind has sought to shirk the responsibility of decision and attain success without effort by consulting those who profess to tell the future. It is a natural human weakness and though the Prophet Laureate has become an obsolete institution and the profession of soothsayer has lost official standing, it is very far from being extinct. The fortune-teller, the clairvoyant, the crystal-gazer, no matter what instrument he may use to pry into the secrets of the future, courts that twilight of the mind into which ocular spectra come floating in questionable shape and has his technique for promoting this mood both in himself and his client. It is a condition singularly favourable to direct communication of Experience from one Self to another, thought-reading in fact.

Some image gleaned probably from his postulant, carrying with it a suggestion of supernormal insight, is almost sure to swim into the prophet's ken, but the utmost wariness is needed that, when an effect has been produced, it is not spoilt by the intrusion of stray wraiths of information outside the frame of reference. Happily the inquirer into the future is generally so startled and delighted by any oracle which hits the mark in his past life and promises well for his future that he ignores the shafts which miss the target, however wide they fly.

Experience, however, seems to show that a certain amount of pre-

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vision, an anticipation of coming events more accurate than either chance or conjecture will account for, does occasionally form part of the soothsayer's utterances. If that is so, the whole problem of precognition is raised. As we have said, the recurrence of prophetic dreams drove Mr. Dunne to elaborate the theory of Serialism to account for them. Belief or disbelief in prevision must mainly depend on personal experience. For myself, I feel sure that dreams do, from time to time, contain elements of future Experience, as it were memories of the future, presented in such a form as to be valueless from the practical point of view except in the rarest cases. Few and far between are the occasions when the gods permit the veil that shrouds the future to be torn asunder. We have supposed that the whole of Ego's life, the world lines of his brain and nervous system, may lie extended, past and future, in the fourth dimension. If this supposition were correct and Ego were able now and then to withdraw his attention from its usual field, the field of the 'now', and dart it forward into the future Experience that awaits him, he might be able to grasp something of what is coming to him in the ordinary course of events. Also, it would be possible for him, if the future was presented to him in a prospective form that he disliked, to alter his route through the world of the Many so as to avoid it.

Other people's dreams rarely carry conviction, but I venture to give two examples of my own which seem to imply a limited measure of prevision and to be rather out of the ordinary. Years ago I was superintending the construction of one of the first dirigible balloons to cross the Channel under its own power and was waiting to fly with it from Mantes to Farnborough. While it was being built, an airship of the same type was lost with all its crew. A propeller broke in flight and one of its fragments ripped open the gas-bag. I read of this accident in the newspapers and soon after I dreamed that I was in the car of our balloon. The sun was shining brightly, we were over the sea, and I noticed how delightfully smoothly we were travelling. The whole scene was vividly impressed upon my sleeping mind. Suddenly there came a loud explosion, and everything was enveloped in utter darkness out of which I struggled—to wake in a fright. I admit that I did not like this dream at all, but after I had told it to a friend I dismissed it from my mind.

Some weeks afterwards the airship started on 'what was then regarded



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as an adventurous voyage. We had a bumpy journey over France, particularly over Rouen, where we pitched and tossed as if we were at sea. When we came out over the Channel, the sun was shining brightly, there were no air-pockets and I was just thinking how nice it was to be travelling so smoothly after our rough start, when I remembered my dream. The scene was exactly the one I had dreamed. As this flashed across my mind there came a loud explosion. Thoroughly scared I awaited the worst. But nothing happened. The sun still shone and we sailed serenely on. A mechanic in the stern, who had a better view than I, shouted to me that our destroyer escort had fired a signal gun as we passed over her bows. The darkness came later, when we were being hauled into the shed at our destination. There had been a mistake as to the dimensions of the hangar. It was too small for the airship and the gas-bag tore open against the roof. Down came the enormous canvas envelope (it was three hundred feet long), smothering the crew and myself in utter darkness, and out of that darkness we had to struggle through the wreckage into the light of day, very much as I had struggled out of my dream back to waking life.

Not being interested in dreams at the time, I thought no more about the matter—it was just one of those inexplicable incidents which do occur in life—but when I read *An Experiment with Time*, it struck me at once that here was one of those prophetic dreams of the type which had caused Mr. Dunne so much concern. Its details corresponded surprisingly with what happened afterwards, but the impression it produced upon me when I awoke was completely misleading, for naturally I had thought of a fatal accident like that which had befallen the other airship and its crew.

The second dream was more complicated. It came at a time when I was making a study of my dreams and trying to understand what happened to me in sleep on the road to Oblivion, which I had already begun to associate with the Vision. When Ego wishes to dream dreams and remember them, his mind carries out his wishes to the utmost of its ability, an ability which depends on its material and organization. He pulls the lever of the calculating machine and it does the rest so far as the imperfections of its machinery allow. Since my interest in dreams has declined, their recurrence is less regular and their recollection more erratic—at least, that is what I learn from the records of my memory.

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In this case my thoughts had been particularly occupied with dreams from two points of view. In the first place I had been collecting examples of prevision like those of the Dunne prophetic dream. Secondly, my attention had been attracted to dream memory and the dream within the dream by two quotations from Coleridge.

'You stood before me like a thought,  
A dream remembered in a dream.'

'Mixed with such feelings as distress the soul  
When dreaming that she dreams.'

The first of these quotations does not raise much difficulty. The damsel with the dulcimer, the Vision in a Dream, is a case in point. Most people, I suppose, have remembered in their dreams something they have dreamed before and recognized it as such. There are many scenes which, to the best of my knowledge, have no existence outside my dreams and which I repeatedly visit in my sleep. We often have in sleep that eerie feeling of the *déjà vu*, which sometimes steals over us in waking life, when we are visiting a place for the first time and are startled with a sense of familiarity as if in some past existence we had been there before. I have known a case in which a man's dream life was more or less continuous. He would fall asleep and pick up his chain of dream memories just as he would wake and pick up his chain of waking memories.

The second quotation deals with something more recondite, the dream within the dream,<sup>1</sup> and though there seemed no particular reason why it should not occur, there was no instance of it among my records. I could not even remember dreaming of falling asleep. That night, when I went to bed, I must all-unknowing have set my mind to create this dream enclosed in a dream, as it were, in brackets, one sleep inside another in the manner of a Chinese box or the stories in *The Arabian Nights*.

This is what I dreamed during the night. I was in an hotel in a lounge with columns. On my left was the door of a sitting-room and on the right double doors opening into a dining-room. I knew that the hotel was full and that I was to sleep on a sofa-bed made up for me

<sup>1</sup> 'On rêve souvent qu'on rêve, entassant un songe sur l'autre.' Pascal. *Pensées* 434. Ed. Brunschvicg.

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in the dining-room just beyond the folding doors. My recollection of the dream started with a telephone conversation in which I arranged an important business appointment and was pleased and surprised to have been able to fix it for the next day. Then I undressed, turned out the light and got into bed in the dark, behind the double doors.

I fell asleep at once, as it were passing from my first sleep into a second, and dreamed a dream, the dream within the dream, though I did not recognize it as such. It was singularly peaceful and refreshing, though it consisted of nothing more than the contemplation of a motionless mathematical figure outlined in red. At least as such I remember it.

I woke suddenly and with a violent shock as if from the very depths of slumber. I had no idea that I was only passing back from my second dream into the first. I jumped out of that dream sofa-bed in a state of consternation. I was sure that I had overslept and missed my appointment. Everything was dark and I had lost all sense of direction as one often does after an abrupt awakening. Bemused with sleep, I stumbled about the lounge looking for the light switch which I knew was on one of the columns.

After an age of anxiety, I caught sight, with untold relief, of a line of light under the door of the sitting-room, opening on the lounge, and heard voices. Thank heavens! people were still up. It was not so late as I thought. After all, I had not missed that appointment. The dream appointment had been made for the next day, but at this stage I seemed to have forgotten that: my time-sense was as muddled as my sense of direction. Footsteps sounded behind me and I knew it must be a waiter. Not wishing to be found wandering about a public lounge in my pyjamas, I plunged back into the sofa-bed. With a click the light was turned on and everything was bright for an instant. Then, with another violent shock, I woke up again to find myself in darkness and awake in the bed which I do not regard as a dream but as a part of waking reality. Throughout these two dreams, the one within the other, I had had no idea that they were actually dreams.

I got up at once and wrote down all I could remember about them. Before I went to bed that night I had had a telephone conversation with my publisher very much as I dreamed it, with the essential difference that to my chagrin the appointment had had to be indefinitely postponed. As the appointment was off I had decided not to go to my office next

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morning, but the dream made such an impression upon me that I changed my mind and called there on chance, as any communication about a change in arrangements would have been sent there. I found a telegram waiting for me. It cancelled the telephone conversation and made the appointment. To anyone collecting examples of dream prevision it was interesting and suggestive, but not conclusive. It might very well be a coincidence, though without the dream I should certainly have missed that appointment.

That night I was listening, by an exceptional chance, to a wireless version of Dickens' *Christmas Carol*. It is the kind of thing I do not care for on the radio and I certainly had never heard it before, though, of course, I had read the book.

'Good heavens!' I suddenly exclaimed, 'that is what I dreamt last night.' In the adaptation, a scene had been inserted to link together two of 'The Staves'. In it Scrooge was heard blundering about in the darkness with his sense of direction lost and utterly confused just as I had been in my dream. He, too, suddenly caught sight of a line of light below a door, heard voices and in his relief thanked heaven that everybody had not gone to bed.

My mind, left to itself, had provided me with exactly what I wanted, a dream within a dream and evidence of prevision. The dream within the dream did not carry me much farther than itself. Its most interesting feature was the vivid memory of the shock with which I woke from the inner dream to the outer, and which seemed no less violent than that with which I awoke into actual waking life. It seemed as if as great a gulf was fixed between the two dream worlds as there is between the world of sleeping and waking. In much the same way the dead Tibetan in the interspace between death and life dies and is born again with a sudden shock, as he passes from one Bardo to another, until he finds another body or attains liberation.

As for prevision, the two prophetic dreams I have cited are merely curious examples selected from a considerable mass of cumulative evidence, which has persuaded me that dreams may anticipate the future with an accuracy of detail that rules out guesswork or coincidence, and that the information from this source is usually so misleadingly presented and so inextricably confused with other elements of memory and imagination that it is far more likely to deceive than instruct. It is true that the dream within the dream did me a good turn,

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but that was an exception, and I am convinced that to rely on precognition of any kind as a guide to action is to ask for trouble. The secrets of the future are well guarded, for their disclosure would rob life of its purpose and meaning.

The reader will believe in these and other paranormal events according to his nature. If he finds no trace of prophecy in his dreams and in his mind no memories for which his senses cannot fully account, he will no doubt dismiss the idea of prevision as a delusion. The recollection and analysis of dreams demands care and thought. Few people dream in words like Coleridge, with well-defined images attached to them, and it is often impossible to translate their streamy associations into intelligible language. Moreover, the construction of the mind is based on an acceptance of the limitations of time and consequently it automatically rejects, so far as it can, any Experience which implies the irrational intrusion of the future into the present, turning a blind eye to anything that suggests precognition. Mr. Dunne remarks on the difficulty of recognizing the prophetic elements in a dream, even when their fulfilment stares one in the face, and my own experience confirms this innate blindness of the mind.

Mr. Dunne puts forward an experiment, easier than the study of the elusive dream, by which anyone can test his powers of prevision or clairvoyance, while awake. Take a book that you have never seen before. Do not open it, but read the title and concentrate your attention on its words. Withdraw your mind from everything that is around you and leave it to follow naturally the chain of thought started by the book-title. This detachment from extraneous objects and irrelevant thoughts, in itself very simple, seems to present almost insuperable obstacles to some observers. It is not to be accomplished by intense mental effort and trying very hard, but by complete relaxation with a one-pointed attention, the necessary preliminary to all mystic contemplation. There must be one initial effort, the lucid apprehension of the title-words, and then the mind must be left to itself. As the Chinese say, non-action must be achieved through action. We shall return again to this state of the Self arising from an attitude of complete detachment.

If a distracting thought arises, it is useless to fight against it. Let it have its way in accordance with the Chinese maxim: 'Examine where the thought is and where it fades out', and then let the mind quietly return to its original intention. Ego will begin to pass into the

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borderland stage of the hypnagogic spectra, though very near to the waking level, and stray images and words will flash up before him. Pencil and paper must be handy and one should jot down the first things that come into one's head and continue the list until the flow of impressions ceases. The catalogue of written words will almost certainly seem nonsensical and without connection or general relation with the title. Yet read the book through and see if there is any association to be traced between the words noted down and the actual story, apart from those which are directly and manifestly associated with the title.

No doubt many people will obtain negative results from this experiment. I have tried it again and again—often with review copies of books just published to which I can have had no possible access—and have been amazed at the results. Images and words which appeared to have no conceivable relation to the title, or, indeed, to one another, had cropped up in my list and coincided, as it seemed miraculously, with verbal phrases and situations to be found in the book itself. Often a confirmation of some note, irrelevant apparently to the point of absurdity, would turn up in the last chapter. Had I been looking forward in the fourth dimension to the images which the book would call up in my mind when I read it, as the Dunne theory holds, or had I been exercising some mysterious faculty of intuition?

Most people must be familiar with intuitions. Sometimes we are sure that a certain event is going to happen—gamblers know it well—without any ascertainable ground for our conviction and the future proves us right. Our certainty does not arise from any reasoning process or any consideration of possibilities; it is more likely to run counter to them. No doubt we tend to forget the occasions on which we were wrong more easily than those on which we were surprisingly right. Yet such intuitions which are usually associated with the female gender cannot be entirely dismissed and they seem to belong to the same order as precognition, telepathy, clairvoyance and the like; for they come to us independently of the senses and of any information that the senses can supply.

American psychologists have invented the term 'parapsychology' to describe the investigation of these phenomena which are as it were off the main track of scientific psychology and have given the name of extra-sensory perception to the faculty responsible for them. These

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terms have the advantage of avoiding any suggestion of the super-human or supernatural, a suggestion from which science must shrink as from blasphemy. Sponsored by that eminent psychologist, Professor William McDougall, these audacious inquirers have undertaken a large-scale investigation of the faculty and its manifestations under controlled conditions and claim after hundreds of thousands of experiments to have established its existence.

These experiments have been mainly based on card-guessing. Shuffled packs of cards distinguished by five easily visualized markings, such as a star, a cross, a circle and so on, were used and volunteers were invited to name the order of cards in the pack or cards drawn from the pack in conditions which precluded them from obtaining through the senses any information as to their markings. If they relied on pure guesswork, the mathematical chances were five to one against the correct naming of any particular card and the results attained over a long period should approximate to this average. Actually it was discovered that a certain proportion of these volunteers, about one in five, possessed a faculty for identifying these unknown cards with a success which far exceeded the 20 per cent of chance.

The experiments were carried on and statistics accumulated with amazing perseverance, until the mathematical odds in favour of the existence of extra-sensory perception so far as these chosen subjects were concerned could be described as astronomical, in the order of millions to one. After establishing its existence to their own satisfaction, the investigators proceeded to a closer analysis of its manifestations, trying to distinguish between telepathy in which information was or might have been derived from another mind and clairvoyance in which only the object card itself and the inquirer's mind seemed to be responsible, and after a varied series of experiments most elaborately controlled arrived at the interesting conclusion that the faculty whatever it is is not subject to the limitations of space. It worked quite as well when the two persons necessarily engaged in a telepathic experiment were separated by 280 miles as when they were in the same room. Later experiments gave reason to believe that extra-sensory perception is also unlimited by time, though I fear a final conclusion is not likely to be reached for some time to come.

Any reader interested in the scientific testing of a faculty which most scientists deny should turn to *Extra-Sensory Perception*, by Professor

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J. B. Rhine of Duke University and *New Frontiers of the Mind* by the same author. These books contain the records of a long painstaking inquiry undertaken, with astounding patience and with every safeguard against error that ingenuity could devise, into a subject which is most refractory to the scientific method. Many people may be convinced by its statistical arguments, if they participate in any degree in the faculty concerned, though I doubt if this conviction will be any deeper than that produced by a careful examination of their own Experience.

Those who are not so gifted will be hard to persuade; for the existence of such a faculty may upset their preconceived ideas. It will be said, not without reason, that anything can be proved by figures. Though the statistics in favour of vaccination appear on the face of them to be overwhelming, there are still many intelligent folk who object to having their children vaccinated. The mathematical law of probabilities is not so simple as it sounds to the layman, and there are mathematicians who attack the basis of the calculations which lead to the computation of gigantic odds in favour of the existence of extra-sensory perception.

Apart from this, it is surprising that any positive results should have been reached. There are peculiar difficulties attaching to such an investigation, for so much depends on mood and surroundings. I have satisfied myself that I can guess the order of cards in a shuffled pack with greater accuracy than guesswork could possibly warrant, provided that I am in the right mood, that I am not disturbed and that I am completely indifferent as to whether I am right or wrong. Trying too hard is fatal. I should certainly fail if I were submitted to a formal examination and it amazes me that Professor Rhine's subjects should have attained significant results when they were working under a system of scientific conditions and safeguards, which would surely distract my attention. He writes of them: 'I would predict that . . . initial failure would be highly probable if they were to be taken before a committee; failure would be practically certain if the committee were made up of impressive people or if its members did anything to excite or distract the subject.'

It may be well at this point to reconsider for a moment the state of the Self, the relations of Ego and Experience, at the time when this mysterious faculty which the mystic readily accepts as a reality apart from scientific proof, comes into play. The same faculty is clearly at work in the prophetic dream, telepathy, clairvoyance, crystal-gazing and so



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forth. Professor Rhine's students speak of 'concentration', 'relaxation', 'detachment', 'abstraction', when they describe their mental attitude in the card experiments, and all these words are equally applicable to the state of the Self described above, when Ego seeks to divine from the title of a book a more intimate knowledge of its contents than the title in itself could convey. In intuitional or extra-sensory perception, Ego's mind remains so near to the waking level that it may be said to be awake and it can immediately report its discoveries by the written or spoken word. In sleep, dream images are the only medium of expression at its disposal.

Exactly what happens in the Self on these obscure occasions can never be completely known. We are again in regions where the precise language of science is not spoken and must be content if we can approach the truth with the aid of metaphor and simile, after looking as closely as possible within ourselves.

Ego seems to have two ways of temporary escape from the tyranny of mortal life, leading by different routes to the same final destination, the peace of pure Consciousness, which is generally expressed in Experience by the blank of Oblivion: the one is the ordinary high road, through sleep; the other passes through that state of combined concentration, relaxation and detachment in which the intuitional faculty becomes active. Weary of the external world, Ego may turn his attention to his memories and begin to think or imagine. For a time he may be absorbed in his thoughts and images as they parade before him under his continuous or intermittent control, as he turns the knobs and pulls over the levers of his mind machine. In time they pall; for they can offer no release from time and change.

If, as he usually does, he takes the road of sleep, he drops the controls of mind and leaves it to its own devices. Ocular spectra appear in such momentary and tenuous forms that they are gone before attention is arrested, and he falls asleep. If he can disengage his attention from all the trammels of Experience, he will dive at once into Oblivion, that gap which represents in Experience the glimpse of pure Consciousness. If, however, his plunge is hampered by images that will not be denied, he is held in the dream state—or it may be that he returns there after the timeless instant of Oblivion.

The depths of slumber are reached as a rule without the preliminary effort of concentration; relaxation and detachment suffice. Ego is still

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in the prison of Experience, but the dream phantoms have less compelling power over his attention than the images of waking life, and every now and then he may escape from these products of his mind. If he is still too earthbound to reach the One, the object of all desires, he may just catch a glimpse, before he is dragged back to earth, of the world of non-Ego, the world of the Many, not as it appears through the senses and sensory experience, but as it is, unconditioned by time and space. Ego is of the nature of the One, spaceless and timeless, and if extra-sensory perception is truly unbounded by these dimensions, something of this nature must have taken place.

One might represent it, as Mr. Dunne does, by a diagram of Experience extended in the fourth dimension, but such a representation would be merely figurative. It would be extremely difficult for Ego, through his three-dimensional mind, to recognize an event occurring in four dimensions. Our two-dimensional observer, if a third dimension were added to his facilities of Experience, might well be bewildered, when he was faced with stationary strands of interwoven threads instead of their cross-sections, the seemingly dancing particles, which had formed letters and patterns in his two-dimensional outlook. In any case whatever Ego has discovered without the aid of his senses, four-dimensional or not, must be transmitted to his mind in images of time and three-dimensional space, if it is to be intelligible, and as such translation must be intensely difficult, it is not surprising that only dim and confused glimmers of the future find their way into his dreams.

We will suppose now that Ego has chosen the second and less ordinary road of escape. It begins with the action that leads to non-action. He must concentrate his attention on a single image and hold it fixed and clear before him. Such a concentration or 'single-mindedness' may be brought about by the continued repetition of a formula which is equally effective, if it is a religious word of power such as the Tibetan 'Om Mani Padme Hum', 'Hail to the Jewel in the Lotus', some magical and meaningless collocation of word sounds, or just the inquirer's own name which was Tennyson's Open Sesame to the Vision. It is as if the unrolling of a film was suddenly stopped and a single picture kept upon the screen. This effort fixes the direction of all that follows and also arrests the activities of the mind. If we stare very hard at some object, the focus of our gaze relaxes and the objects round it gradually intrude into our field of vision. When Ego's attention concentrated at

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first on the fixed image relaxes, as it is bound to do, other images come into his field of Awareness as it were concentrically, but the fixed image seems to close the entrance to his mind and memories, and these new images may be not the product of his own Experience, but glimpses of another world outside himself. It is difficult to put a complete stop to the activity of mind, and it continues to work spasmodically, trying to push the one chosen image aside and letting other of its memories slip into the field of Awareness, to mingle with the impressions which Ego may have gathered without the intervention of his mind and senses, giving them substance in space and time.

It is by this road that the adept mystic passes to the Illumination and Enlightenment of the Vision. Here the Christian Saint will find that in reiterating his devotions, he is not using 'vain repetitions as the heathen do', for his prayer serves to fix more firmly in its place the chosen image, perhaps the glory of God or the Most Sacred Humanity. In this state the mind may be, as it were, just kept awake, even to the moment of consummation, so that it does not reach that extreme pitch of quiescence which belongs to the moment of Oblivion in sleep, and some fragmentary reflection of the meaning of the One can be brought back into the world of the Many. But thence Ego passes from the regions of extra-sensory perception to a plane where all perception is swallowed up in the self-knowledge of Consciousness, and prevision, telepathy, clairvoyance and the rest cease to have any significance.

I fear that I have dealt with these 'parapsychological' phenomena in a rather perfunctory manner. They must not be confused with mystical revelation with which they have nothing in common. The mystic knows that it is not only through the windows of the senses that the light of reality penetrates into the Castle of the Soul, and the discovery of an unrecognized faculty, the establishment of a sixth sense, would conform with his theories of the universe without adding anything to his philosophy. If such a faculty exists, he will be content to leave the study of its operations to the scientific specialist. There is always a danger that the austerity of the mystic outlook may degenerate into a cult of the marvellous, a luxuriance of superstition, which, as Dr. Inge points out, in his admirable *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, eventually submerged the lofty doctrines and noble ideals of Neo-Platonism. Magic is the death of mysticism.

It is vain to speculate whether the faculty of extra-sensory perception

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may represent a power susceptible of development or the survival of a disappearing and obsolete instinct. I incline to the latter explanation. It may well belong to the same category as the migratory and homing instincts of birds. Earlier in the cycle of life, when Ego could gather but a fraction of the information he needed through his undeveloped organism and mind, the secret purposes of life were furthered and safeguarded by a direct extra-sensory perception of external things. As time went on, its place was taken by organized Experience and the direction of life entrusted to the guidance of mind for a reason that has yet to be discussed. On the other hand it is conceivable that this faculty may still have a part to play at a higher stage in development, when there will be less danger of its misuse.

## PART II

### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION

Withdraw into thyself and look within. If thou dost not find Beauty there, take example of the sculptor who, to give beauty to his statue, chisels, planes and polishes, until a lovely face emerges from the marble. So do thou cut away all that is superfluous, make straight all that is crooked, give light to all that is dark and rest not from working at thy statue, until the Divine splendour of Virtue shines out from it upon thee and thou seest Goodness herself established in the Holy of Holies.—PLOTINUS, *Ennead*, i, 6, 9.

Non per avere a sè di bene acquisto,  
ch'esser non può, ma perchè suo splendore  
potesse, risplendendo, dir 'Subsisto',  
in sua eternità di tempo fore,  
fuor d'ogni altro comprender, come i piacque,  
s'aperse in nuovi amor l'eterno amore.

DANTE, *Paradiso*, xxix, 13.

Not for His own greater good—to the Good no good can be added—but that His splendour in its reflected resplendence might have power to say, 'I am', within His own eternity, beyond all time and understanding, after His own pleasure, in new loves did He, Eternal Love, reveal Himself.

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## CHAPTER NINE

### THE INCARNATION OF GOD

... we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things ...

... And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy

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Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.

WORDSWORTH, *Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.*

It must have been long apparent to the reader that this attempt to interpret the Vision is the work of neither an advanced mystic nor a profound philosopher. An ordinary man of the world asked a question: 'What is the meaning of life in general and my life in particular?' and received an unexpected answer which for its understanding demanded expression in terms of his own Experience and personality. The previous chapters contain an outline of some of the journeys which he essayed in his search for that expression, and the quest was originally carried to the half-way house beyond which this book scarcely ventures without any special appeal to the accomplishment of far more gifted visionaries recorded in the great literature of mysticism.

At the beginning of his spiritual adventure, the writer knew practically nothing of this literature which had had no attraction for him. He had read Plato and worshipped him as a consummate literary artist rather than as a philosopher. Dante was no stranger to him, but he set far more store by the *Inferno* than the *Paradiso*, which transcended his intellect and experience. The works of the great mystics, Christian and Pagan, did not appeal to him, as in his ignorance he attributed to them the obscurity and irrational emotionalism of self-deception. Moreover, it was the essence of the task laid upon him by the Vision that he should explore its meaning in the light of his own intelligence.

In the foregoing pages many references are to be found to the books of mystics and other writers who were only consulted when the interpretation of the Vision had taken shape, and it may be well to recapitulate here very briefly the conclusions reached, apart from these later accretions of deeper mystical lore. The message, as the writer understood it, so far from prescribing withdrawal from the trials and troubles of this mortal life to the philosopher's ivory tower and the

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beatitude of solitary contemplation, enjoined a full participation in all its vicissitudes. It affirmed the importance of all that passes between birth and life, for nothing in the whole scheme of things, seen in the light of the eternal, can be dismissed as unimportant or an unfortunate mistake. The One was avid of manifold Experience in the world of the Many. Doubtless a part of that Experience might be gained in the arduous scaling of the remotest heights of mysticism, by the denial of all pain and pleasure and the difficult discipline of complete isolation, but such a call was for other and rarer natures. As the Vision appeared to the writer, absorption in the One could not be pursued as an end in itself, since the Mystic Union could never be broken, and it is vain to pursue that which is ever present. It was enough that its radiance should have illuminated Experience and once and for all enlightened faith in things unseen. Henceforth the abiding memory of its Light would shine as a guiding star. The Vision itself would return at the appointed season and meanwhile Ego, strengthened by the knowledge of his own nature, could best await its coming by playing as well as he could his allotted part in the tragi-comedy of life.

The significance of the Vision appeared to centre round the problem of Consciousness, and he was compelled to accept as absolute reality the conscious Ego, a unity in which subject and object are identical and which therefore knows that it exists. We all assume the existence of this permanent Ego throughout our lives—we cannot deny our own existence—though Ego is continually confused with the phenomenal self or personality, that subordinate part of the Self, which consists of Experience and is non-conscious.

This distinction between Ego and non-Ego, between the conscious subject and the non-conscious object, Experience, necessitates a rigid precision in the use and definition of certain terms. (Consciousness, it was agreed, should be used only in the meaning of self-consciousness,<sup>1</sup> that identity of subject and object which enables Ego to comprehend his own existence. It is clear that the self-knowledge arising from Consciousness, in which the object is completely taken over into the subject, is something entirely different from the knowledge which results from the apprehension of non-Ego by Ego, by a subject of an object which remains distinct from itself. Even if they can both be

<sup>1</sup> It is important to distinguish between this meaning of 'self-consciousness' and its other significance, 'Awareness of Consciousness'.

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described as knowledge, they none the less belong to different orders of being; the identity of subject and object is a contradiction in terms in the world in which subject and object are mutually exclusive. For this reason we attribute to Ego, over and above the quality of Consciousness, a faculty by which he apprehends non-Ego and which we distinguish by the word 'Awareness'. We say that he is conscious of Ego and aware of non-Ego. This distinction and our definition of Consciousness rules out the application of that word to the objects of Ego's Awareness. We cannot use such a phrase as 'states of consciousness' for the changing manifold of Ego's thoughts and feelings, because such manifolds do not know of their own existence. Such phrases as 'conscious rectitude', 'acting consciously', 'conscious motive', must also disappear.

We are always assuming the reality of a conscious subject—we cannot say 'I' without affirming it—but when we try to think about it, it seems an impossibility. Many thinkers regard it as a delusion, because it cannot be thought, but if our analysis of the Self is accepted, the argument that Consciousness is evolved from 'states of consciousness' falls to the ground; for these so-called 'states of consciousness' are really non-conscious, being merely objects of Ego's Awareness, and it is absurd to argue that a succession of non-conscious manifolds can produce the unity of consciousness.

The objection to 'self-consciousness' is well expressed by Professor A. E. Taylor in *Elements of Metaphysics*, quoted by Dr. Inge in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*.

'We cannot too strongly insist that if by self-consciousness we mean a cognitive state which is its own object, there is no such thing, and it is a psychological impossibility that there should be any such thing as self-consciousness. No cognitive state ever has itself for its own object. Every cognitive state has for its object something other than itself.'

There is no gainsaying this argument, but we reply that 'self-consciousness' is not a cognitive state; for cognition implies the duality of subject and object. Comprehension of the One, says Plotinus, belongs to the order neither of knowledge nor of intellect like things intelligible but to a presence passing all knowledge. It is for this reason that the Mystic Union is never directly presented in Experience to Ego's Awareness, but only in symbolic form. Consciousness does not belong to the order in which discursive reason rules supreme and in



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which the gulf between subject and object cannot be bridged; there, it is a contradiction in terms, though we cannot deny—certainly the mystic cannot deny—its reality. We accept it as participating in an order transcending the world of Experience in which we live, and discursive reason itself has borne philosophers out of its own domain, in which subject is subject and object object and never the twain are one, into the realm of absolute Unity where not only subject and object, but all things, are one.

This Unity is called by philosophers the Absolute and by theologians, God, and the Vision is the realization in Experience of the presence of the Divine within the Self. The divinity of Ego as the principle of Consciousness may sound a hard saying to those moralists who so rightly describe selfishness and egotism as the source of all sin and evil, but selfishness and egotism are concerned not with the divine subject, but with the objective self of Experience which is gathered round Ego in this mortal life like the body round the soul. They are the denial of the kingship of Ego in the Self and the setting-up of Experience in his stead.

Unselfishness, in its highest sense, is that purification of Ego from all worldly things without which the realization of Mystic Union is impossible, in the words of Plotinus, 'the stripping of the Soul of its lower nature'. The worldly Polonius can scarcely have grasped the inner meaning which the words Shakespeare has put in his mouth might bear.

"This above all: to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

This acceptance of the identity of subject and object as a transcendental, a divine, relation, carries with it certain logical consequences which came to the writer as a surprise. It implies the denial of that interruption of Ego's being commonly called 'unconsciousness'. Ego may cease to be aware of any object and the gap of Oblivion may break the continuity of his Experience, but the Consciousness without which there can be no Awareness is never broken. His participation in the One is timeless and can know no change. Most of his life he is conscious without being aware of it, and he is still conscious when he is aware of nothing. The Mystic Union is never severed.

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It follows that the divine principle of Consciousness which we have called Ego must be extended to all life, even to its humblest forms. The identity of subject and object is an absolute which cannot be reached by partial stages or degrees. We cannot apply the principle of Evolution to the One, the timeless and changeless God; it is only the objective self, the Experience which belongs to the world of the Many, which is subject to perpetual change and development. (The principle of all life is the Divine Consciousness. It matters not at all that the image of selfhood may never appear in the Experience of the lower forms of life. There can be no Awareness or Experience without a background of Consciousness. It may be doubted whether there is anything in the universe without life. It may only be the limitation of our senses which hides it from us in the things we call inanimate.

'The visible spectrum', writes Dr. Inge in *The Philosophy of Plotinus*, 'occupies only one twenty-seventh of the known range of ethereal vibrations. We only see a small fraction of the colours which eyes differently constructed might see. The same is true of sound. We hear over a range of about eleven octaves, but physicists assure us that there must be thousands of octaves. Our mental picture of the world is like that which would be conveyed to an audience by a musician who played on a piano, of which all but half a dozen notes were dumb. If that audience got any notion of a tune, the tune would be largely the work of their imagination, and would be very unlike the tune composed by Mozart or Beethoven.'

If, however, the inanimate does exist, it can only be distinguished from the animate by the absence of the divine spark of Consciousness, which is the same for all and always.

We have spoken of the Self in its duality of Ego and Experience as the Private Universe and suggested that no living thing can ever pass beyond its boundaries, but the phrase needs qualification, for, in the Mystic Union, Ego is contained in the Supreme Principle of the One which contains all things in absolute unity. In our daily life, however, our participation in the All is not expressed, and we regard Ego and Experience as forming our Private Universe, which we imagine to be bounded by the third world, physical and external, of which our knowledge is confined to the information contained in Experience, whether derived from the senses or some other source. Ego, Experience and the third world correspond to Spirit, Soul and Body, Spirit being the

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divine principle of Consciousness and Awareness, Soul, that non-conscious abstract manifold, the object of Spirit's Awareness, which is born from the contact between Spirit and the material world which is represented by Body.

There are schools of thought which find pleasure in maintaining the tradition that the great secrets of life and death, revealed to man in some prehistoric Golden Age, have been preserved and handed down from time immemorial in the esoteric doctrines of Sages and Initiates who, in an unbroken chain, have passed on the torch of hidden wisdom throughout the world and throughout the ages. They would have us believe that the inmost Truth of the Universe has lain concealed from the profane under a vast conspiracy of silence or at least beneath the cryptic symbolism of a Secret Religion, intelligible only to the Chosen Few. I must admit to a prejudice against secret societies of all kinds, even if their professed object is the protection of humanity by the withholding from it of a wisdom so deep as to be dangerous to the common herd. The mysteries of a secret society are more likely to be evil than holy. There is, indeed, no need to hide the mystery of mysteries from the ordinary sensual man, on whom the Vision has not dawned, for it can never be expressed in terms that will make the slightest impression on his understanding.

Yet for some mystics, the memories left by the Vision carry with them a feeling that silence alone is worthy to veil so holy a revelation. After the Vision of God, the rest is silence. So Paul, after he had been swept into Paradise, the Third Heaven, felt not only that he had heard unutterable words—that the event was beyond description—but also that it was 'unlawful' for mortal man to speak them, impious to try and describe it. Plato, if with Dr. Inge we accept the Seventh Epistle as genuine, declared that no treatise on the Idea of the Good, the One, 'the crown of his philosophy', would ever come from his pen. There were no words to express the mystery, but after long communion and a life spent with it, suddenly a light would be kindled as from a leaping tongue of flame, which would penetrate to the Soul and there find its fuel. Plato knew that no one could write or speak about it as well as he could, and it would grieve him deeply if it were unworthily treated, but he abstained from what he thought would not be a good thing for man, except for a very few who could make the discovery for themselves on the strength of a mere hint. Dr. Inge adds the testi-

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mony of Clement of Alexandria: 'To write down everything in a book is as bad as putting a sword in the hand of a child.'

On the other hand, the library of mystic literature is there to prove that this rule of silence was not imposed by the Vision on all its adepts. Plotinus, Dante, Santa Teresa, to mention only three, told of the ineffable with the inspired tongues of Sage, Poet and Saint. They are all agreed that words are powerless to describe the glory they have known and they all share the hope that the very inadequacy of language may strike a note of recollection in the hearts of those who have not quite forgotten their eternal home.

Samuel Johnson blamed Jacob Böhme for trying to give utterance to the unutterable, but in a sense all events are indescribable, since no symbol can fully represent the reality for which it stands. The mystic when he speaks or writes about the Vision is three degrees removed from the Truth, for he deals in symbols of symbols of a transcendent Reality, and the figures and metaphors of the spiritual language lag so far behind the truth they symbolize that their inner meaning can scarcely be grasped except by those who have had experience of the Original which they seek to express.

What, then, can be said about the One, the Absolute, the first Principle of Life and Existence? The Neo-Platonists have been accused of knowing too much about the unknowable and talking too much about the ineffable, and later we shall consider briefly Plotinus' conception of the Absolute. As it is, depending on the ladder of reason and the Ego within us that is of its very nature, there is little we can say. The One must be all-inclusive and there can be nothing beyond its boundaries or, rather, it can have no boundaries. It must be changeless and homogeneous, subject to the limitations of neither space nor time in solitary and changeless duration. Perfect in its absolute unity, it must be at once its own subject and object and therefore be conscious. For if the One were not conscious, the One which is Eternal Being would be as good as non-existent; for there would be nothing to know its Being. It is all-knowing, since it is the object of its own knowledge by virtue of Consciousness; for there is nothing outside itself to know.

If we take the categories of Knowing, Feeling and Willing, and apply them to the One, we find that it is all-knowing in its Consciousness of itself, that its feeling is summed up in the contemplation of its own perfection, which is also Consciousness, and that its will is lost in

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the changelessness of complete accomplishment. For this reason we hold that Consciousness is the only quality that can be predicated of the One considered as the Absolute. It is Dante's eternal Light, self-knowing and self-known, smiling upon itself with perfect self-satisfaction. Any conception of such an entity could hardly have dawned upon the human mind, if we did not carry within us an example of its nature.

There is little profit to be had from the study of metaphysical problems in which reason tries to transcend reason and once again we must resort to allegory in our interpretation of the Vision. We have tried to imagine the One in the loneliness of its omniscient self-knowledge as it might have been before the creation of the Many. But there is no question here of God creating the universe and all His creatures for His own delight or for some deep inscrutable purpose. The One is logically prior to the Many, as without Consciousness there can be no reality, but the timeless cannot be temporarily prior to the Many or anything else. In our myth concerning their relationship, we shall have to speak as if the One had created the Many at some moment in time, but there can be no moment in the timeless Being of the One and temporal priority is to be taken as the allegorical symbol of logical priority.

How the One can contain the Many so that they seem to exist side by side, how unity can become diversity and still remain unity is a mystery which calls for philosophical faith, and Ego and Experience are there to prove that they do coexist within ourselves. There is no creation of the universe either in time or eternity. The One is always in immutable duration or timelessness and the Many have become, are becoming and will become in eternal cycles of time, without beginning and without end. They are two aspects of the one Reality and neither has ever existed without the other. Perhaps we may say that the nature of the One can only find fulfilment through the Many and therefore, since it is perfect, must contain the Many within itself.

Yet in our allegory we must follow all the legends of the Creation and speak of the One as though it preceded and created the Many, and now we picture it as still wrapt in perfect self-complacency, but stirring in its beatitude like 'the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come'. The Almighty can only dream reality<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plotinus compares the entry of Form into Matter to 'the dream of the Good'.—vi, 7, 28.

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—His will is accomplishment—and with the dream a new universe springs into existence and a new mode of relationship. In the One, subject is object and object subject, but now unity has become diversity and the Many stand over against the One, distinct and separate in the order of object to subject.

Recalling our fantasy of time, we see this new dream universe stretched out in four dimensions before the One under the light of his Awareness which is, as it were, the light of Consciousness turned outwards. In its diversity, it reflects the perfection of unity as closely as may be and the dream stuff will allow, and we may compare it to a masterpiece of Divine art, perfect in its whole and in the balance of its parts—for the One is Beauty itself and nothing but itself can be more beautiful than its work—but lacking the absolute perfection of identity. The One looks upon this picture which embodies its dream, lifeless, motionless and immutable—for as yet time is not—and sees that it is good. The Absolute has created and accepted the first limitation of its infinity, the limitation of space; for multiplicity without succession or interpenetration requires space to contain it and the universe of the Many is presented to the Awareness of the One in infinite diversity, but changeless and timeless as the One itself.

The creation of a diversity of objects within the unity of the One marks the first step taken in the differentiation or limitation of the Absolute, which, in this interpretation of the Vision, appears as the meaning of life and the universe and as the means directed towards the fulfilment of a divine purpose yet to be defined. In this beginning of all things which we have imagined, though there has been no beginning, God contemplates in one eternal gaze the diversity of His changeless dream universe and its beauty, and the splendour of His Awareness irradiates all its four dimensions. But two further limitations are still necessary: a multiplicity of conscious subjects must correspond to the multiplicity of objects, and Awareness must submit to the tyranny of time.

Consciousness itself cannot be divided, for absolute unity is the essence of its being and only the One can be both subject and object to itself. How, then, can we speak of the differentiation of the One, its discrimination into individual units of Consciousness, into this Ego of yours and mine which we think we know so well? And to what can we compare it?

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Let us liken the One to a sun blazing in the centre of the universe of the Many, the system of the All. The light of Consciousness 'self-knowing and self-known', turned inwards to illumine itself is one and indivisible, but the light of Awareness beaming outwards into the order of the Many may be split into innumerable rays, each ray lighting its allotted and appropriate portion of the objective world and giving it life, for each of these allotted portions is what we call an organism. Like radii of a circle, the rays of Awareness are all united in the centre of Consciousness from which they can never be parted, for ever one with God, but each beam is distinct and draws ever farther from its fellows, as it approaches its appointed goal in the circumference of the Many, the body of its incarnation. The light of Awareness is the spiritual light which proceeds from God and bridges with unchanging continuity the gulf between the One and the Many, the Archetype of that temporal light of waves or particles which is the limiting velocity of our world.

We must now consider the birth of time. According to our fairy tale, it implies a limitation in the fourth dimension as well as motion. We may think of the beams of Awareness radiating from the One as shining unimpeded in three dimensions on their allotted sphere, but with the coming of time there is a contraction and narrowing of this illumination in the fourth dimension. In that dimension the light becomes the thinnest of thin rays, like a fine pencil of light thrown upon a picture in darkness or sunlight shining into a dark room through a long thin crack in the shutters. The full light of Awareness can pour broadcast over its field in three dimensions, but in the fourth dimension that field is in total darkness except for the cross-section illuminated by this narrow streak of light.

Time begins when these fields of Awareness, mere lines without breadth in the fourth dimension, move in that dimension under the impulse of the One through the stationary universe. It is as if the Sun of the One itself began to revolve on its axis in the centre of all things and each ray of awareness, conscious as emanating from the One and terminating in the organism by which it partakes of the Many, each Ego, revolved with the revolution of the One and swept over the circumference of the Many with a single uniform motion, their united fields of Awareness forming the universal 'now'. The One, knowing its own purpose and the design of the universe which it has dreamed and

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seen as a whole, launches this 'now' on the course best suited for the accomplishment of its will, but the pattern of the Many which, seen in time, we call causation, cannot correspond exactly with that purpose; for unity and multiplicity can never coincide. It is not enough for the 'now' to speed on in a straight line through the complications of the Many. Its course requires constant correction, but if corrections were continually made by the all-knowledge of the One, though the appointed destination would be reached, the ultimate purpose of the voyage would be defeated.

In that beginning of things that never was, we may imagine the 'now' speeding on its unswerving way under its initial impulse, bearing with it the fields of Awareness of all life. It is so constituted that though it sweeps on in the general direction first imparted to it, its course is not absolutely determined and its movement is so delicately poised that it may, in certain circumstances, be influenced and turned aside by the will of any conscious unit of Awareness as a great rock that is nicely balanced will sway this way or that at the touch of a finger. It is Ego's vocation to push and coax and guide so far as he can the hurrying 'now' in the way it should go, but he has much to learn before he can interfere and still more before he discovers when and how to interfere.

Ego may be accurately described as the conscious unit of Awareness: in so far as he is conscious, he is one with the Universal Consciousness; in so far as he is aware, he is a lonely and unique individual, for that of which he has been, is and will be aware, his Experience, belongs to him alone and separates him from the All. If, in his relationship to the object world of time and space, we compare his Awareness to the outer manifestation of Consciousness, apprehension of non-Ego corresponding with self-comprehension, and the feelings arising from the change and instability of the Many with the self-satisfaction of perfect unity, we must add the faculty of activity and purposive endeavour corresponding with the Divine Will otherwise lost in the complete accomplishment of the One. Ego, the representative of the One in time and space, being of the Divine nature, must contain within himself the principle of that nature and the design after which the material world was dreamed or created. It might seem then that he should be able to direct the course of his 'now' over the ocean of the Many with unerring accuracy, and so he might, if it was not for the limitation of time.



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The One, contemplating as a whole and outside time the universe of its dream, might take into itself its full reality and know it both in its entirety and its parts. Ego in his separate Awareness, his vision hampered by the blinkers of time, can only apprehend an infinitesimal fraction of the whole and that only in part and indirectly. Even if his Awareness could present to him directly things as they are really in any given 'now', his apprehension would tell him nothing. In time, almost the whole of the universe, all its past and all its future, lies in darkness, and the line of light, so thin in the fourth dimension, thrown upon it, can show nothing significant, if Ego's Awareness is confined to a single isolated presentment. As we have said, a single 'now', a single instant of Experience, provides Ego with no information at all outside itself, until it has been brought into relation with other 'now's. In a word, time imposes upon Ego the necessity of memory and in the One there is no memory and no past to be remembered. The Experience of many 'now's must somehow be held together, compared and combined. It must be given permanent form within the Self so that Ego may store it away and be able to collect it and re-collect it. Only in this manner can he gather from the world outside the information he needs to guide his endeavour towards the fulfilment of the Divine purpose in which he partakes.

So there arises in the category of the Many, midway, as it were, between the One and the physical world of its creation and born from their conjunction, a new order of being, the world of Experience which alone gives value and meaning to objective existence, and which is the crown of creation. The One is of its nature peace and immutability, and we make believe that the physical universe, despite its diversity, endures without change or movement in itself, the only real motion being the revolution of the Awareness of the One in relation to it. Experience, however, as the product of time, is perpetually changing, holding the past in memory, and forever adding to its store and combining with it all that life can gather from each succeeding 'now'.

Certain conditions are necessary in the space-time universe for the entry of life with the gathering of Experience and the formation of memory, as it were mirrors to reflect its light and the objects on which it shines or rather sensitive films to preserve their images, and provision has been made for such organisms throughout the pattern of the world. They lie extended in the fourth dimension so that they seem to develop

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in time, each separate organism from germ to maturity and maturity to dissolution, and classes of organisms tending to pass from simplicity to increasing complexity, as they perform more efficiently their functions of building mind from Experience. The course of Awareness in time was chosen by the One to the end of shaping, varying and multiplying the countless forms that Experience can take.

We cannot know how the process of life begins and even when we try to examine it in a higher state of development, in ourselves, it remains unfathomably obscure. Almost it would seem that Experience must be stored as memory before any physical organ which we can discern has been developed to contain it. If so, good-bye to psycho-physical parallelism! In that case, are the memories gathered in some common store-house or do they already begin to form about the separate unit of Awareness that body of Experience which is to distinguish it from all others? We can imagine that Ego might stand aloof from the stream of undifferentiated touch sensations, which are presumably all that can be presented to him through the simplest organisms. His severance from the One would be only beginning and he would still feel its beatitude as his own, scarcely clouded by the shadows of mortality.

With the birth of memory, the parallel development of Experience and organism goes on apace, and Ego is enclosed within double walls of time and space, Experience and organism, soul and body. There are many false starts and failures. Life has not yet gathered enough Experience to correct the course of time which, as we have said, though set in its general direction, needs continual adjustment amid the storms and cross-currents through which it seems to pass. Gradually, however, an organism is evolved with a more and more complex and efficient system for selecting perceptions and acquiring Experience to be arranged and eventually worked into the machine of mind. From memories of the past, Ego deduces anticipations of the future and seeks to influence the course of time in the direction which seems good to him, by instinct or reason. The material world appears to him not as a stationary expanse over which his Awareness passes as lightly as the shadow of a wind-driven cloud over the sunlit downs, but as a concrete universe of bodies in violent motion, perpetually colliding, rebounding and combining. It seems to him that he can to some extent modify the bodies of his environment and their relations, though he can do no

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more than deflect a trifle the track of his journey through the motionless universe. His power of interference, his influence over the course of time, may seem infinitesimal, but the smallest fraction of an inclination represents a vast deviation in the case of the highest velocity and unlimited distance. Moreover, Ego learns to reinforce his puny efforts with those of his fellows and to turn the activity of their wills to his own purposes.

The Hindus say that 8,400,000 births are necessary before life can be born in the body of a man, and one of the stages in the unending evolution of Experience and organism is Ego's gradual discovery that though he is fast bound in his Private Universe, there are others like him in the same plight. The growth of language multiplies his own store of memories by the communicated Experience of others, and the word 'I' set over against the word 'Thou' consecrates his exile in space and time. The symbol Ego once established in Experience enters into Ego's Awareness as an object unexplained and taken for granted, and it is not till mind is reaching a later stage of development that its good faith is tested by reason and found wanting, and it is rejected as a delusion and contradiction in terms. When the law imposed by Ego upon the mind is called in to prove that Ego, the conscious subject, does not exist, then, indeed, his severance from the One would seem to be complete. He denies his own Consciousness and is merged into his Experience like an erring Vestal Virgin immured in the wall of her cell. The incarnation of the One has been accomplished.

The accomplishment of the One's ultimate purpose demands that Ego should lose himself in the world of the Many and forget the Mystic Union in which his Consciousness holds him in the eternity of timelessness. Therefore the impulse given to the 'now' is directed to the elaboration of an organism to serve as his lodging or prison in the world of space and time. We have referred more than once to the ultimate purpose of the Absolute, but no attempt has yet been made to fathom his inscrutable Will. The differentiation of God is in itself no answer to the riddle of the Universe and all our efforts to find it in an interpretation of the Vision are wasted, unless we can give in terms intelligible to our finite minds some explanation however feeble of the final purpose which controls space and time and the All. The full truth is utterly beyond our mortal apprehension, though we are one with Truth in the Mystic Union. It is the essence of the Vision to bring into

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our temporal Experience beyond the veil of Oblivion an image of the mysteries of the eternal One, and so we must pursue our interpretation of its meaning, until we can discover, as far as our infirmity permits, some acceptable answer to the prosaic question, 'A quoi bon?'

It is clear that at the beginning of a cycle, the first and necessary aim of life is its own establishment and maintenance in the physical world, the survival of the individual counting as nothing against the survival of the species. The method of trial and error seems clumsy and wasteful and suggest imperfect knowledge on the part of the Prime Mover, but it can scarcely be denied that it is directed to some definite goal. The first business of life is to live. The argument from design may be discredited, but who can scrutinize the ingenuity of contrivance displayed by Nature on every side—the fertilization of plants, the life history of many insects, the ways of the birds and so on—and doubt that she is working to a plan? If chance is her guide, then the mathematical law of probabilities can have no meaning at all.

In the course of Evolution other subsidiary ends appear such as development from the simple to the complex involving the growth and increased efficiency of mind, augmented knowledge of the Self and the physical world, but they are all pointless, unless they lead to some final goal. As we have left the argument, a long and most complicated process has done no more than carry Ego from the enduring peace and beatitude of pure Consciousness to a chequered existence compact of sorrow, pain and fear, intermittently brightened by a few pale rays of transitory joy and happiness. If we look back at his journey into time, it seems a lamentable conclusion.

With the aid and guidance of the Vision, and under its impulse, the writer has sought to scale heights of thought and speculation far beyond the modesty of his mental capacity and equipment. When he came to speak of the ascent of the topmost peak, the quest of the Final Cause which reconciles all opposites not only in eternity but in time and space, his heart failed him. The answer he had found to all his questionings satisfied his heart's desire, but he felt that before he tried to express it in words or communicate it to others, he must seek the assistance of far greater minds than his own. So he paused and turned to the study of such mystical books as came his way. He went back to Dante's *Paradiso* with eyes opened by the Vision, found confirmation in Santa Teresa's story of her life and her *Castillo Interior*, and gleaned a little,

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a very little, knowledge about the mysticism of the East. All this he incorporated in the chapters of this Essay, which have already been presented to the reader.

Yet though these scriptures encouraged him by confirming his certainty that the Vision in its three aspects, which he has named Mystic Union, Illumination and Enlightenment, was in its essence one and the same for all, great or small, genius or fool, saint or sinner, they gave no reply to the supreme question, which he could regard as satisfactory. The Christian solution he could not accept and the Eastern dismissal of life and the universe as an inexplicable blunder was utterly opposed to his own conviction. Perhaps the Chinese Taoist came nearest to the conception of the meaning of things, which had strangely dawned upon him and lightened his darkness, with its acceptance of life and its obligations, illumined by the light of the Supreme.

Finally he appealed to the genius of the greatest of all mystic philosophers, the 'most divine' Plotinus. In the *Enneads* he found ratified and marvellously enriched all that had delighted him in the classics of mysticism he had read and far more than that a sublime edifice of towering philosophic intuition and thought, built on the sure foundation of Plato's wisdom, glorious and immaterial as the sunset clouds, yet defying time and destruction in its symmetry and eternal truth. The splendour of this accomplishment dims this faint interpretation of the Vision as sunlight dulls a household fire, and I felt that I must borrow something from his exalted wisdom to sustain its weakness and give it depth and substance. Yet there were points on which I was in honour bound to differ from the Master, and important points at that. Without being untrue to myself, I could not swerve from the main lines of exposition imposed upon me; for the task which had befallen me was the expression of something transcending all Experience in terms of my own Experience and the solution of the final problem shown to me remains, from my point of view, more persuasive, comprehensive and soul-satisfying than any I have found elsewhere. It may well be nothing new and adept philosophers may pick holes in it and reject it; for ultimately it appeals rather to that intuitive conception of the Good, which is shared by all as transcending reasoning, than to the austere logic of the metaphysician. The appeal to intuition after all is a principle which lies at the base of all mysticism. There is, however, so much in the philosophy of Plotinus that will lend

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life, vigour and persuasion to what has gone before that, before turning to the final issue, I have given in the next chapter a brief summary of those doctrines of the greatest of Neo-Platonists, which illustrate, confirm or expand the ideas already put forward. The translations are my own, but I have not hesitated to avail myself of Mr. Mackenna's classic translation and my debt to Dr. Inge's *The Philosophy of Plotinus* is beyond repayment.

## CHAPTER TEN

### THE 'MOST DIVINE' PLOTINUS

And this is the life of the gods and of godlike and blessed men, deliverance from our exile here below, a life that takes no pleasure in earthly things, the withdrawal of the alone to the Alone.—PLOTINUS, Final sentence of the *Enneads*.

La lumière s'abaisse du plus haut des cieux jusqu'au plus bas de la terre mais sans s'avilir; elle pénètre tout mais sans s'infecter; elle s'unit à tout et s'incorpore à tout, mais sans se mêler; la pureté, la simplicité, la netteté et la dignité de son être étant telles que dans ces conditions corporelles elle a les conditions spirituelles et ne reçoit aucun intérêt et variété en soi-même par la variété des choses où elle est unie.—PIERRE DE BÉRULLE.

P lotinus', writes Dr. Inge, 'is the one great genius in an age singularly barren of greatness. The third century is a dull and dark period, which has been avoided by historians for its poverty of material and lack of interest. It was a depressing age even to those who lived in it.' Porphyry, Plotinus' disciple who edited his lecture notes under the title of the *Enneads*, wrote a Life of his Master who lived from A.D. 205 to 270, and it presents us with the picture of a shy and gentle philosopher saint who, despite his life of contemplation, was sufficiently worldly wise to have been entrusted with the guardianship of a number of orphans of good family, so that 'his house was full of boys and girls'. An Egyptian by birth, he studied under Ammonius Saccas who set the seal of esoteric secrecy on all his teachings. At the age of thirty-nine he went to Rome and opened a school of philosophy, counting among his friends the Emperor Gallienus and his wife.

A life of sane ascetism and self-denial, the discipline of study and high thinking, a rare and innate spiritual insight and the practice of the one-pointed contemplation of the Divine had made of the philosopher an advanced mystic of the highest order. The absorbing purpose of his whole life was to draw near to the God of All and to become one with

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Him. That purpose, we learn, he achieved on many occasions and the Vision came to him four times during the six years Porphyry was with him. 'I too Porphyry', writes his biographer, 'can say that once in my sixty-eighth year I also drew near to God and was made one with him.'

It is not often that Plotinus refers his interpretation of the Vision to his own experience and in one of these rare personal references, describing the confusion of mind that awaited him on his return to earth, he confirms Porphyry's statement that its coming was to him no uncommon occurrence.

'Many times it has happened: awakened from my body into my true self, becoming outside all other things, but within myself, beholding beauty beyond wonder, then more than ever assured of communion with the Highest, living in the activity of the best life and in union with the Divine, established therein by the attainment of that activity, raised above all things less than the Supreme, even things spiritual—yet the time comes when after this sojourn in bliss, I pass from the Vision to mere reasoning and I am utterly at a loss how it can be that I am now descending and how my soul ever came within my body, being of such nature, even within that body, as it has manifested itself to be.'—*Ennead*, iv, 8, 1.

'O dreadful is the shock—intense the agony—  
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;  
When the pulse begins to throb—the brain to think again—  
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.'

Emily Brontë. *The Prisoner*.

This cry of stricken wonder finds an echo in the ejaculations of Illumination, the puzzled utterances of every mystic on his return to the bewilderment of earth. Of the bewilderment of Santa Teresa and Dante's confusion we have already spoken and we may trace a certain likeness between Christian Saint and pagan philosopher in their manner of writing, though the untutored genius of Teresa and the deep learning of Plotinus are poles apart. They both possessed a superhuman power of concentration which rose superior to all interruptions. Plotinus could keep up a casual conversation and never lose the thread of some lecture he might be preparing. The Saint wrote her masterpiece, the *Castillo Interior*, in four worried weeks, broken in half by five months of



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desperate struggling for her Reform. They both wrote at headlong speed, careless of repetition, confusion or spelling, and neither of them could be prevailed upon to read over what they had written. They shared the same intense earnestness of purpose. Porphyry had no easy task in editing the Master's note-books.

Plotinus could never bring himself to revise what he had written and would not read it over again even once; his weak sight made reading difficult for him. As for his hand-writing, he made no attempt at forming his letters properly and cared nothing for calligraphy. Often he would run one word into another and he paid no attention to spelling. He was only concerned with the thought that he was expressing. Much to his pupils' surprise, he was never cured of these slovenly habits to his dying day. He would plan out his subject mentally from beginning to end and then transmitting his thoughts to writing, his pen would pour out what he had in mind as though he was copying from a book. If he was interrupted, he could keep up a running conversation and yet never lose his grip on the theme he had in hand, keeping unbroken before him his chain of thought. When the interrupter had left, he did not turn back over what he had written—his sight as we have said hampered him—but ran straight on with the continuation of his argument, as though there had been no break in his writing. He could do two things at once, concentrate on his own thoughts and listen to others, and he never relaxed his inward attention except perhaps in dreams—and he had not many of them; for they were kept away by his abstemiousness—often he would not touch even a piece of bread—and his complete spiritual abstraction.'

Plotinus does not seem to have heard voices like Socrates, St. Paul and Santa Teresa. He sees the Vision with the eyes of the spirit, but in one happy passage he compares the concentration which precedes its coming to the intentness of one listening for the voice of the beloved.

'When we are waiting to hear a well-loved voice, we shut our ears to all other voices and keep them alert for the coming of that longed-for sound. So here we must be deaf to the sounds of sense and keep the soul's faculty of apprehension one-pointed and ready to catch the voices from on high.'—*Ennead*, v, 1, 12.

One is tempted to compare a quaint Chinese conceit from *The Secret of the Golden Flower*.

'The hen can hatch her eggs because her heart is always listening. . . .

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Therefore a hen, even when she has left her eggs, always has the attitude of listening with bent ear.'

Santa Teresa thought it labour wasted to pursue the Vision which comes and goes at its own pleasure and Plotinus agrees that we must not seek it, but wait quietly for its appearance. It is to this passage that Coleridge refers in the quotation from *Anima Poetæ* given on an earlier page.

'When this Light suddenly dawns upon us, we are at a loss whence it comes, whether from without or from within, and when it has left, we exclaim, "It was within us. Yet no; it was outside." It is useless to seek whence it comes, for there is no "whence". It neither comes nor goes, but either appears or does not appear. So we must not pursue it, but wait quietly until it dawns upon us, preparing ourselves for the Vision, just as the eye waits on the rising of the sun, which blazing up above the horizon, from Ocean the poets tell us, offers itself to our sight.—*Ennead*, v, 5, 8.

In similar terms, Numenius, a philosopher of Apamea, whose ideas Plotinus was accused of stealing, memorable for his dictum that Plato was Moses writing in Attic Greek, describes the Watcher for the Vision, emphasizing that loneliness of which Plotinus speaks so often.

'As a look-out stationed on some watch-tower by the sea, with one keen glance, catches a glimpse of some little boat in the trough between two waves, a mere cockle-shell utterly alone in the waste of waters, so must we withdraw far from the world of the senses to enter into solitary communion with the One, face to face in a world where there is neither man nor living being, nothing material either great or small, but only loneliness beyond all words, beyond all telling, the loneliness of God.'—*Numenius ap. Euseb. Pr. Ev.* xi, 22, 1. (fr. 10 Th.)

The light of the Mystic Union can only break through the veil of Oblivion, if the mind behind the veil has been prepared to receive it, either by divine grace or by long study and practice. The rules of discipline and preparation are substantially the same for all orders of mysticism. The way of the novice is hard and hilly, for ever alternating between rapture and despair. The Jewish mystic, Philo, who lived two hundred years before Plotinus, compares it to a ladder.

'The life of the neophyte may be likened to a ladder. The beginner's way is by nature a thing of ups and downs, at one time rising to the heights, at another descending to the depths, like a ship that meets fair

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and foul weather. His life, as Homer tells us of Castor and Pollux, is a matter of alternate days, one day alive and awake, another dead or asleep. . . . Halfway between the extremes of Good and Ill, he must climb perpetually up and down as if he was on a ladder.'—Philo Jud. *De Somn.* i, 23, p. 643.

The mystic must learn to strip Ego of the temporal sheath of his personality, the vesture of his Experience, as a snake sloughs its winter skin. The sinless soul, says Plotinus, must free itself of all accretions, before the Vision can appear. Plato tells us that to see the soul as it is, we must knock off it the accumulations which have gathered round it in life just as we can see nothing of Glaucos, that fisherman sea-god whose sudden deification provided Dante with so subtle a simile, until we have scraped him clean of all the barnacles, limpets and seaweed that have encrusted him.

'If a man sinks into a swamp and all the good looks he once had are plastered over with mud, there is nothing to be seen of him except the crust of filth with which he is smothered. His repulsive appearance is due to this coating of alien matter and if he wants to recover his good looks, he must wash and scrub himself back to what he was before. . . . So it is with the soul. Let her stand aloof from the desires that too close an intimacy with the body has brought upon her, set free from all passions, cleansed of all bodily encumbrances, abiding in loneliness within herself—then in that moment, she has been stripped and cleansed from all the ugliness which was brought upon her by this covering foreign to her nature.'—*Ennead*, i, 6, 5.

Again:

'The attainment of the Good is for those who strike boldly upwards, their eyes fixed on the heights, putting off those garments of defilement in which their fall has clothed them. So for those who draw near the Sacrament of the Mysteries, there are prescribed purifications, the putting off of the garments they wore and the approach to the altar in utter nakedness.'—*Ennead*, i, 6, 7.

'The secret of the magic of life,' writes the Chinese Sage, 'consists in using action in order to achieve non-action.' The banishment of all distracting thoughts and intense mental concentration making of the mind a *tabula rasa* are needed to produce that ineffable calm which opens the way to the Vision. The mirror of the mind must be cleansed of all alien images by the focussing of attention on a single object, if

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it is to reflect the light of Mystic Union. Plotinus might at the same time write a lecture and talk to a friend, though from what follows he seems to doubt the value of the gift ascribed to him by the faithful Porphyry, but if he sought the Vision, he must bring to it a mind freed from all alien thought by an effort of concentration.

'If your mind is aghast at the revelation that the One belongs to the order of things unknowable, take your stand upon the order of things known and gaze, but in the gazing beware lest you cast your vision outwards. The One does not lie in one place leaving another void, but for him who can touch it, it is everywhere ever-present, but absent for him who has not that power. In ordinary life we cannot think of two things at once or pay attention to one thing while we are occupied with another. If we are really to think a thought, we must allow nothing extraneous to be added to it. Similarly we must recognize that no one can attain the Vision as long as he has in his soul some active thought alien to the One. A soul stamped with alien impressions cannot take the impress of their exact opposite. We said of Matter that it must be without quality of its own, if it is to receive the forms of all things: so and far more so, must the mind be formless and indeterminate, if it is to hold no impediment to the fulfilment and illumination of the Most High. It must withdraw from all things external and turn inwards on itself, inclining to nothing outside itself, blind to all worldly things, first to their order here below and then even to their images in thought. We must be blind even to ourselves, lost in the Vision and one with the Absolute; then, after full communion, we shall return, able to report to another, if there were words to tell it, our intercourse with God. . . . God, Plato tells us, is in every man, present to all, though we know it not. We have fled from Him and cannot find Him. We have lost ourselves and seek in vain Another—children distraught who cannot recognize their Father. But he who has learnt to know himself will know whence he came.'—*Ennead*, vi, 9, 7.

There is neither Vision nor Union—in other passages Plotinus agrees that the Mystic Union can never be broken—for those who are busy with any other concern. There must be nothing, either good or evil, to come between the soul and its loneliness with the One. Even the image of Ego in all the beauty of his divinity must be dismissed for the sake of Union with God who is present in the silence.

The mystical experience is not necessarily associated with the

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contemplation of God. It may be brought about by any concentrated activity. Every great artist has known 'high hours of visitation from the living God'. Dr. Inge quotes appositely from Philo a passage describing the inrush of inspiration on a mind engaged in deep philosophical study.

'Sometimes, when I have come to my work empty, I have suddenly become full, ideas being in an invisible manner showered upon me, and implanted in me from on high; so that through the influence of divine inspiration I have become filled with enthusiasm, and have known neither the place in which I was nor those who were present, nor myself, nor what I was saying, nor what I was writing, for then I have been conscious of a richness of interpretation, an enjoyment of light, a most keen-sighted vision, a most distinct view of the objects treated, such as would be given through the eyes from the clearest exhibition.'

So Plotinus remarks that there is something to be said for those frenzied worshippers of strange orgiastic rites, after the order of the dancing dervish, whose reason was drowned in emotionalism and who swarmed in the Alexandria and Rome of his day.

'Those who have been carried out of themselves and possessed by some supernatural influence do at least know that they hold within them a power greater than themselves, though they do not know what it is. From their own cries and enforced gesticulations, they learn that they are being moved by a power which is other than themselves.'—*Ennead*, v, 3, 14.

The Mystic Union can be held neither in thought nor memory. Its reality escapes when we try to affirm or understand it, for the understanding which must pronounce the affirmation can only apprehend an object by taking its parts successively and an absolute unity has no parts.

'At the moment we touch the One, there is no power, no leisure, to speak; reasoning about it is for afterwards. We know that we have seen the Truth when light suddenly illumines the soul, for this light is from the One and is the One. We know then that it is present, for it comes as those gods of our mythology, who when called upon illumine the house of the suppliant with the radiance of their presence; there would be no light if the prayer had not been granted. So the soul unillumined has no part in the Vision. Illumined it possesses what it sought and this

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is the soul's true end, to take possession of that light and to see the Most High by the Most High, his Light by his own Light, as it is by the light of the sun that we see the sun. And how can that come to pass? Shed everything.' *Ennead*, v, 3, 17.

Whether the words be Greek, Spanish or English, no matter what the earthly tongue, the spiritual language is hard to understand. 'He who has seen knows what I mean,' says Plotinus. As Dr. Inge puts it, 'his last word to us is, "Remember that there are parts of what it most concerns you to know which I cannot describe to you; you must come with me and see for yourselves. The Vision is for him who will see it."' A man, Plotinus adds, who has been blind all his life, cannot tell of the beauties of the world that he has never seen, nor can a man who has never beheld the face of Virtue more lovely than 'the stars of Evening and Morning' speak of its comeliness. So only those who have known the Vision and 'seeing have felt rapture, awe and emotion beyond all Experience' can tell of its wonder.

The association of Light with the mystery of God is universal. Philo says, 'God is Light', the Archetype of all light, emitting beams innumerable to be perceived not by the physical eye, but by the Spirit. Dr. Inge speaks rather strangely of Plotinus developing in the eighth chapter of the Fifth *Ennead* 'the curious notion of the supreme holiness and beauty of light. "Everything shines Yonder."' No doubt his physical theories of light and vision are crude, but I can find nothing in that chapter which has not many parallels in mystic literature.<sup>1</sup> From the heights of Transcendence, says Plotinus, the glory of the Good shines down upon both gods and men, flooding them with radiance. Those whose eyes (like Dante's) are strong enough to gaze fixedly into its effulgence behold the source of all goodness and beauty. In that heavenly world everything is ablaze with light and its splendour makes beautiful all who find their way thither. Those whose spiritual light is still imperfect are no more than spectators of this apocalypse, but those who have drunk deep of the divine nectar are no mere spectators of an external spectacle. The Vision which they behold is within themselves and they are one with God.

Plotinus seems to have noticed a phenomenon with which I have been long familiar—and no doubt many other people, though it was

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the extract from Pierre de Bérulle at the head of this chapter quoted in *Man and the Supernatural*, by Evelyn Underhill.

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unknown to some of the friends to whom I have mentioned it. I mean that light which glows with varying intensity when the eyes are closed. I am not referring to that aftermath of light and colour which remains for a time when the eyes have been shut against light—'after-images', I believe is the scientific name—but to a radiance that may appear in the intervals of sleep when not a ray of light has passed between the eye-lids for many hours. No doubt it has been fully explained by physiologists. It was a radiance of this nature which appeared to me to herald the approach of the Vision. I have italicized the words which seem to refer to this phenomenon.

'The eye may see not only an external and alien light, but it may also see a light of its own, far more brilliant in a momentary flash. At night in the darkness a ray may leap out from within the eye or *when we are wanting to see nothing, the light may be projected against the closed eye-lids*, or again we may rub our eyes and see the light within them.—*Ennead*, v, 5, 7.

As we have said, the coming of the Vision is accompanied by a feeling of shattering amazement in the discovery that the real self is not what we thought, but something of an utterly different nature. The sense of being raised above humanity, Dante's '*trasumanazione*', leaves behind it complete bewilderment. Plotinus says that in the Vision we are made Kings and learn our true nature.

'He who has learnt to know himself is a two-fold person: on the one hand there is the lower self which takes cognisance of Experience; on the other, the higher self who sees himself in the Spirit no longer as a man at all, but as a being that has been utterly changed.' *Ennead*, v, 3, 4.

Elsewhere he speaks of the realization of that higher self which we have called Ego, in terms which are almost identical with those that we used in defining Consciousness and describing the basic event of the Vision, the Union with God, as a moment of pure Consciousness. The coincidence is noteworthy.

'In the Vision, the seer and the seen, the subject and object—it is a daring assertion—are one. Then the seer neither sees nor distinguishes them as two nor imagines them apart. He is utterly changed, no longer himself, no longer self-belonging. He belongs to God and is one with him like two circles which have one centre: they are one when they coincide, two only when they separate. In this sense only and only in this world, can we say that the soul is other than God. That is why the

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Vision is so hard to describe. For how can one describe as other than oneself that which when one saw it seemed one with oneself?—*Ennead*, vi, 9, 10.

Again in a striking passage of a sermon on Beauty with Plato's Phædrus myth as text—*Ennead*, v, 8, 10—he insists on the absolute identity of seer and seen, of subject and object, of spectator and spectacle, in the Vision of the Divine Beauty. The Gods, the Dæmons and the souls of the elect ascend to the heights of heaven, to the heaven that is above the heavens, to behold the rising of this glory which beams upon them with dazzling effulgence like the rising sun. They are as men climbing a peak in the golden mountain glow which all climbers know, transfigured with all their surroundings by the radiance which is shed upon them, but in the Vision the glow of Beauty is no superficial bloom on men and things; it permeates them through and through. Indeed they become Beauty itself. Those gifted with the keenest spiritual sight, whose souls are steeped in the Divine Beauty, cease to be mere spectators. The spectacle they behold is nothing external, but within themselves, is indeed themselves. Others less gifted, not realizing this identity, may think that they are gazing on an external spectacle, but the Vision is not as earthly sight when that which is seen is external to that which sees. Here seer and seen are one and identical. This is true Consciousness and Self-Comprehension and the seer must take good heed that he does not lose himself by awakening his earthly senses in his desire to see too much.

The great Neo-Platonist, seventeen hundred years ago, was well acquainted with that happy feeling of familiarity left behind by the Vision like the recollection of some forgotten secret, the sense of coming home, which remains among my liveliest impressions. We are raised, he says, above the clouds and fogs of the world Here to the world Yonder, 'like a man who after long wandering returns to the law and order of his own dear country'. Elsewhere he echoes Plato. 'Let us fly to our Beloved Fatherland.' Our Fatherland is the country Yonder whence we came and Yonder is our Father.

That strange combination of perfect peace and pulsating energy which appears in the essence of the One finds its explanation in Plotinus' reconciliation of the opposites. The One is at once both rest and movement, since it transcends them both.

After the Vision, with its conviction of eternity, any discussion of



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the immortality of the soul, at least of that part of it which is isolated in that revelation, seems mere waste of time: in Spinoza's uncompromising words, 'sentimus et experimur nos aeternos esse'. If the soul can mount up to the Divine and become one with Him, its nature must be divine and eternal. Such is the argument of Plotinus and in this connection Dr. Inge quotes a remarkable passage from Baron von Hügel's *Eternal Life*.

'All states of trance, or indeed of rapt attention, notoriously appear to the experiencing soul, in proportion to their concentration, as timeless; i.e., as non-successive, simultaneous, hence as eternal. And hence the eternity of the soul is not here a conclusion drawn from the apparent Godlikeness, in other respects, of the soul when in this condition, but the eternity, on the contrary, is the very centre of the experience itself, and is the chief inducement to the soul for holding itself to be Divine. The soul's immortality cannot be experienced in advance of death, whilst its eternity, in the sense indicated, is or seems to be experienced in such this-life states; hence the belief in immortality is here derivative, that in eternity is primary.'

The name of Love throws a golden radiance over all the literature of mysticism. The ecstasy of the Vision and the raptures of earthly love returned are blended in symbolic harmony and the Song of Songs, with its passionate celebration of the joys of the flesh, becomes a chaste Canticle of thanksgiving for the ascetic and contemplative lover of God. Santa Teresa loves Christ as a distressed damsel might love some Galahad knight-errant and she does not love in vain. Her love is returned and she talks with her God as one lover with another.

In Plotinus' philosophy, Love is nobly enthroned. His master Plato had set the god on high. It not only makes the world go round, but holds together the Persons of the Godhead and binds all things mortal to the Divine.

'For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.'

Love in the *Enneads* is always the yearning of the lower for the higher, never that sublime and almost humble condescension for the creatures of time and space, which brings down the All High among them to be clothed in sorrow and flesh. Love implies deficiency. It is a craving for something that is lacking. So love must be denied to the

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One, as God is above all things and in Him there is no deficiency. To this all-important point, we shall recur in the next chapter. Plotinus cannot say 'God is Love', in the sense of the Almighty's love for the created, for he can ascribe love only to the Second and Third Persons of his Trinity, who gaze up in passionate adoration towards the Transcendent. Yet within this limitation, he pays full tribute to the might and beauty of All-Conquering Love. The Vision is the consummation of the Spirit in love, the famous *Nous Erôn*. The clogging mind may reason and welcome, but the Spirit, drunk with the nectar of Divine passion, soars above all reasoning and, fallen in love with the Perfect, is rapt into Union with the Beloved.

'And soul, that soul empowered by knowledge and vision, turned towards the Perfect and was enraptured by the sight; as her vision, so her ecstasy. She saw and was stricken. And being in part of like nature with it, she was aware of the sympathy of fellowship and was filled with passionate longing, as lovers here below are moved by the image of the loved one to seek the beloved's presence. In this world, the lover moulds himself into likeness with the beloved, bringing both body and soul into conformity with the comeliness of the other, determined not to fall short in any excellence or grace within his power, lest for his deficiency he be scorned and rejected. This is the way of true lovers. In the same manner, the soul loves the One, being stirred with love towards it since before all worlds, and if she has been faithful to that love, she does not wait for the beauty of this world to remind her of her passion. She loves, perhaps even all unawares, and is ever in quest of her love, yearning to be borne into its presence and scorning all mortal loveliness.'—*Ennead*, vi, 7, 31.

Passages of extreme beauty, conveying Plotinus' interpretation of the Vision, the recollections of his Enlightenment, are scattered profusely through his work and the reader who cannot follow them in the original will find copious extracts admirably translated in the Second Volume of *The Philosophy of Plotinus*. Choice is difficult and I have chosen the following paragraphs from the Sixth *Ennead* as an expression of the timeless moment worthy of the highest achievement of mystical inspiration. The seer of the Vision can only express himself in the symbols of his own Experience and the terms of abstruse metaphysical speculation come naturally to Plotinus as his spiritual language.

'When the soul has been blessed with readiness for the Vision and

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has made her way to it, or rather its presence has been revealed to her, when she has waved away all earthly things and adorned herself to the utmost in beauty and likeness to the Perfect—that preparation and adornment those who practise them know full well—then suddenly she beholds the Glory manifested within herself; for there is nothing between—[no veil of Oblivion we should say]—nor are they, the soul and the One, any longer two, but both are one. In that presence there can be no division. It is in imitation of this union that lovers here below long to merge themselves in a single being.

'The soul has no perception of the body and knows not that she is in it. She has no name for herself and cannot tell whether she be human, alive, existence itself or the universe entire. For here there is no place for the contemplation of such things. She has no time to waste on them and has lost her pleasure in them. Having sought God, she meets His presence, gazing upon Him and not upon herself. What she is as she gazes, she has no leisure to know. In this state of bliss, she would accept nothing in exchange for it, not even the heaven of heavens; for there is nothing better, nothing more blessed. She can soar no higher, for all other things even the highest lie on the downward flight.

'With the certainty of perfect judgment, she knows that she has attained her heart's desire and that there can be nothing beyond it. Here there is no deceit. What can be truer than Truth? She is herself the affirmation of that Truth, but the time is not for words. What she affirms is affirmed in silence. Words will come later. She knows that she is happy and in her happiness can be no deceit. To all temporal things, rank, power, riches, beauty, knowledge, she bids farewell with the scorn of one who has found better than they. In Mystic Union she fears no ill, no, not even if she only sees in part. Though all the world fall in ruins about her, she is well content, the better to be one with God. To such a height of felicity has she come.—*Ennead*, vi, 7, 34.

The reader who wishes to scrutinize in detail and admire the majestic architecture of Plotinus' Metaphysics must turn either to the philosopher himself or to Mr. Mackenna's brilliant translation of his works or to the masterly exposition of his philosophy elaborated by Dr. Inge in the work so often quoted. Here it is impossible to give more than the barest outline of an interpretation of the Vision, which is based on the foundations laid by Plato, perhaps the greatest genius the world has ever known, and carried yet higher into the loftiest realms of mysti-

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cism by another genius, Plotinus. We can only survey cursorily such aspects of this philosophy as can be related to the conceptions of the timeless moment set out in the earlier part of this book. It is to be remembered that the question which the writer asked of life anticipated no complete reply, no detailed chart of the inexplorable. All his requirements could be satisfied by some simple answer which would not fly in the face of reason, some rough sketch map of the unseen such as in romance leads the explorer to the discovery of the buried treasure.

'There are', says Dr. Inge, 'two fundamental triads in Plotinus: one of these is the Trinity of Divine principles, the Absolute, Spirit and Soul; the other is the tripartite division of man into Spirit, Soul and Body.' A few words must be said about Plotinus' Godhead with its three Persons, though I venture with trembling into that world where, as Dr. Bussell used to say, a equals a, which tells you nothing, and a equals b, which is quite impossible.

In the Plotinian Trinity, the three Persons are co-eternal, but not co-equal. Spirit and Soul as emanations are inferior to the Absolute in the metaphysical hierarchy and of the three the least is Soul. The Absolute which, Plotinus tells us, is in strict truth the Nameless has in his philosophy a number of names. It is the One, the Good—'perhaps we should understand Plotinus' supreme category better if we called it "the Perfect" instead of the Good,' says Dr. Inge—the Supreme, the Transcendent, the First, the Father, to mention only a few of its titles. The transcendence of the One in the Godhead is described by Plotinus in language suggestive of the triumphal procession of an Eastern Potentate and we are reminded that in quest of the wisdom of the East he accompanied the Emperor Gordian in his ill-starred expedition against the King of Persia.

'Spirit (the second Person of the Trinity) is a great god, a secondary god who manifests himself before the Revelation of the Supreme. The Supreme sits enthroned on high, exalted on the fair pedestal of Spirit which is dependent thereon. Its Majesty in its royal progress could not consent to be borne aloft upon some soulless palanquin nor even upon Soul itself (the third Person), and its approach must be heralded by beauty beyond thought. Before the Great King in the procession marches first the minor train; the greater and more venerable follow after and closer to the King the lesser royalty. Before his

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person, those of highest honour and most exalted rank form the Body-guard.

'When all this magnificence has passed, suddenly, in all his glory, the Great King appears. The watching crowds—some spectators perhaps may have had their fill of the preliminary spectacle and gone away before his advent—prostrate themselves and do obeisance.

'In the royal progress of the Most High, the King and the attendants who go before Him are not of like nature, but of different orders of being; yet He is no oppressor of foreign subjects. His empire is the rule of perfect justice, inherent in nature, and true kingship. He is the King of Truth, Lord in very right over the multitude of his own offspring, King of Kings and most justly entitled Father of Gods.'—*Ennead*, v, 5, 3.

In such picturesque language Plotinus insists on the transcendence of the One in the Godhead, but when he seeks to give us some idea of the nature of that supremacy, we are soon swept away into the regions of the incomprehensible. The East sometimes defines the Absolute as the Reconciliation of the Opposites, that in which all contraries are merged in absolute agreement, and however hard the reason strives, its flights can only end in a contradiction in terms. Reason has outstripped itself. We have been transported to the world of Yonder, where there can be neither reasoning nor speech. Reasoning seeks to solve doubts and difficulties, and Yonder there is neither difficulty nor doubt. Yonder one soul knows by direct intuition what another would communicate to her just as in this world the eyes can read an unspoken thought. 'Yonder every being is an eye; nothing is hidden, nothing complicated. Everything is known before it is spoken.' So Plotinus might well excuse the obscurity of his subtle reasonings about the Absolute.

What was said about the One at the beginning of this book went no further than the ordinary philosophical commonplaces on the subject, apart from the audacity of attributing Consciousness to it. Plotinus devotes a good deal of space to its discussion—too much his critics say—and in the main he tells us not what it is but what it cannot be. All definitions are limitations—*omnis determinatio est negatio*—and the Absolute is *ex hypothesi* unlimited and indeterminable.

The One, we learn, is beyond all statement and stands utterly aloof with something of the detachment of the gods of Epicurus. 'Nothing can ever mar its sacred everlasting calm.' Unaffected by all that pro-

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ceeds from it and all that is beneath it, it abides utterly self-sufficient and self-content. It is determined only by its own uniqueness. It is not what it chanced to be, but what it must be, yet there is no 'must'. It is what it is and not otherwise, because so is best. It is Unity Absolute and we can only depart from its presence, silent and bewildered, to seek no further. Dr. Inge acutely remarks that if the Greeks had had the mystic symbol of the circle as the sign for zero, they might well have anticipated John Scotus Erigena who called the Absolute 'nihil'. '*Per excellentiam non immerito nihilum vocatur.*' Without Consciousness the Absolute would be nothing. In nothing there can be neither subject nor object: in the Absolute subject and object exist and the two are identical.

Yet perhaps something more positive may be gleaned from Plotinus' negatives. 'Seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing, its perfection has, as it were, overflowed and its exuberance has produced something other than itself.' The Many have sprung from the superfluity of the Perfect or as the French say from '*l'extravagance du parfait*'. 'How,' asks the philosopher in a later chapter of the same *Ennead*, 'how could the All-Perfect remain fixed within itself or the Almighty lack power to give itself ungrudgingly?' The One reconciles within itself activity and repose and perhaps we may say that it is 'the eternal potentiality of Being, containing within itself all distinctions as yet undeveloped'.

Yet when all is said and done, when we are weary of defining the Supreme as the indefinable, the strangest of all mysteries remains. By a miracle passing understanding, the soul, or as we should say Ego, borne on the wings of intuition, is able to embrace the ineffable in his comprehension and, finding that he is of its nature, to enter into its unity and become one with it. So he returns to the land of Yonder, to the home that always awaits him, so near that it is not even round the corner, and in one all-comprehensive act of self-surrender takes refuge in the Eternal Truth.

The second Person of the Trinity, *Nous*, that word in which the attributes of Spirit and Mind are blended, and much more besides, is the first-fruits of the exuberance of the One. With it unity begins to pass into plurality and the Ideas of Good, Beauty and Truth come into immaterial existence. It is the world of Plato's Ideas, the essential reality of all that is lovely and of good report, the thoughts of God, the model

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of which the world we know is only a feeble copy. These abstractions as we regard them appeared to the Master's spiritual vision far more clearly and distinctly than anything his physical eyes could behold. It has often been remarked that for Shelley the creations of his imagination were far more real and concrete than the dull solid world outside his mind. To give reality to things external, he must liken them to figments of his fancy which seem to others mere airy nothings. He sees the enchanter and the fleeing ghosts far more vividly than the whirling autumn leaves. 'The dustiest abstractions', says Francis Thompson in his *Shelley*.

'start and tremble under his feet  
and blossom in purple and red.'

Similarly for Plato's vision, the Idea of Beauty was real with a reality that no temporal thing could possess. The Divine Thoughts arrayed in majesty about the One have been compared to Dante's Mystic Rose, the circle of angels and blessed spirits gathered in contemplation and service about the throne of God.

Spirit furnishes Plotinus with a divine world in which almost insensibly the One passes into the Many. It is nearer to unity than Soul which by its contact with Matter creates diversity, but already plurality has found its way into the Godhead. In our interpretation of the Vision, we have imagined the One face to face with its dream of the universe of the Many, but the interposition of this world of Spirit between the One and its dream world would have added cogency to the myth. Before the One can dream, there must proceed from it the revelation of those mysterious potencies that lie latent in its being.

Turning to the particular, Ego in his relations with Experience must be guided by those principles of the One which only become active in the Many, the will to good, the rule of order and harmony, the love of virtue and beauty. In our allegory we might have imagined that his Awareness, directed in life towards the dream universe, must first pass through this realm of Principles which, as a frame of reference, gives shape and purpose to the ray of Awareness, before it reaches the transparency of Experience, through which it observes the outer world, as Coleridge looked out on his garden through the reflections on his window pane. The fancy, if it be a fancy, makes it easier to understand how Ego carries with him into life those ideals which he could never

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have gathered from the outer world. Plotinus tells us that from the world of Spirit we derive order, concord and harmony which are virtues here below. In the perfect world Yonder, there is no need of order, concord or harmony and no need of virtue—in perfection there are no values—but none the less by the presence of virtue in ourselves, we become like the divine inhabitants of that sphere.

Soul, the Third Person, the outpouring of the Spirit, links the other Two Persons with life and the material world. It lies below Spirit, but its connection with the One is never broken. The Absolute is like a waterfall breaking out from a lake and for ever pouring the superfluity of its waters, first into the basin of Spirit, and thence into the pool of Soul beneath. The source of both Spirit and Soul is one and the same. The One in its absolute self-sufficiency transcends the work of creation and Spirit working through the agency of Soul becomes the creator of the universe. The universe and all the stars of heaven are divine and living beings. The picture Plotinus paints of the entry of life into the universe through the advent of All-Soul inspired a passage of St. Augustine already quoted.

‘How then did Soul bestow on the universe and the separate beings it contains the gift of life in abundance? Let us suppose that it befell in this wise. Another soul met the gaze of the Great Soul with its gaze, and this other soul was no mean one, but one made worthy to gaze upon its greatness, delivered from the enchantments which had deceived its fellows, and hushed in perfect quietude. Hushed was the body that clothed it and all its surging clamour, hushed all that lay around, hushed the earth, the sea and the heavens themselves. Into the quietude of those heavens, let Soul be conceived as flooding and pouring from without on every side, on every side the inrush and illumination of Soul. As the sun’s rays strike the darkness of a cloud and leave it all ablaze with gold, so does Soul illumine the space of the heavens, giving life and immortality, awakening that which lay low and lifeless. And the heavens, set in eternal motion by the wisdom of Soul, become a blessed and living Being and from the indwelling of Soul they are exalted in honour and worth; for before they were but a corpse, dead clay and water, or rather the darkness of Matter and non-existence, all that the gods hate, as Plato says.’—*Ennead*, v, 1, 2.

‘In Plotinus’ philosophy’, says Dr. Inge, ‘there are no hard boundary-lines drawn across the field of experience. His map of the world is



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covered with contour-lines, which, as in the designs of modern surveyors, are to be understood to indicate not precipices but gradual slopes.' His Trinity is not divided by definite demarcations and there is neither division of the Substance nor confusion of the Persons. The emanations of Spirit and Soul flow outwards and downwards from the transcendence of the One, until Soul reaches the shadowy immaterial realm of Matter, which is only a degree removed from nothingness, and thence all the forms and phases of existence flow back towards their source, in loving aspiration yearning towards the Perfect. It is the eternal systole and diastole of the universe. Spirit has two activities, on the one hand its outward flowing, the creation in its image of that which lies next below it, that is Soul; and on the other the contemplation of the One above it; so Soul looking downwards generates the material world after the model of the Divine Thoughts contained in Spirit and aspiring upwards yearns towards Spirit and the One on high.

The One transcends Reality. Spirit and Soul alone are real and all that lies below Soul is mere appearance, Matter, an imperceptible abstraction as immaterial as that void in which the lonely electrons fly, on the verge of Non-Being, capable only of receiving—and that imperfectly—the forms imposed upon it by Soul.

Plotinus' Trinity has carried the writer to heights far above the scope of his ambition into the rarefied atmosphere of the loftiest speculation, in which the stoutest explorer can only pant for breath. When he set out to interpret the Vision, he had no thought of attempting to scale the highest peak; enough for him and more than enough if he could climb to some shoulder of the mountain from which he could survey a part of the road over which he had travelled and catch a glimpse of the country that lay before him. With a sigh of relief, he turns back from the universal to the particular, from the Godhead to the triad of Spirit, Soul and Body in Man.

There is an elusive fluidity in Plotinus' philosophy. His ideas and conceptions run into one another like our thoughts and feelings in daily life. No wonder he was apt to forget, when he was writing, the divisions between his words. In dealing with the soul of Man, he distinguishes in it certain phases which cannot be rigidly defined. There is first the Spirit-Soul which abides in eternal contemplation of the Divine and in Mystic Union, then there is the reasoning Soul, that lower phase which, though it cannot grasp the truth entire, finds its

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way to partial knowledge through the power of intellect and understanding. Finally there is the lowest phase, the Animal-Soul which belongs to the combination of soul and body and is the principle of animal-life. Soul itself in all its phases is immortal, and when the Animal-Soul is separated from the body in death and ceases to exercise its lower functions, they are not extinguished but survive as potentialities.

All individual souls are one in the All-Soul, but they become separated in their connection with body. Soul gives life to the lifeless and becomes subject to division, just as a single face may be reflected in many mirrors. Division is a mark of inferiority and only the lowest phase of the soul accepts it; the highest phase is always one with the Divine. Consequently part of the soul remains impeccable throughout life. 'At the centre of the soul there is a something which the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages called the Spark, or Synteresis,<sup>1</sup> which "can never consent to sin".' (Dr. Inge, *Plotinus, Philosophy*, April 1935.) The legend of Hercules is taken as betokening the lower and higher phases of the soul. Homer puts the shade of Hercules in the Nether World, but Hercules himself among the gods. Hercules was a hero of worldly prowess, though his supreme courage and devotion to duty made him worthy of a place among the gods. His merit lay in action, not in that mystical contemplation of the Divine, which would have carried him straight away into the realms above. So it is that though he himself sits among the gods, a part of him, his shade, remains in the Nether World.

That image of the Vision on which we chanced in our interpretation provides Plotinus with one of his favourite similes. We are to think of the soul as one of many straight lines proceeding from the common centre of the Divine. In that centre they are all united and it is only in relation to their terminals on the circumference, that is the physical world, that they can be regarded as separate from one another. The soul, says Plotinus, revolves about that central focus and its attention should always be turned inwards towards its own divinity. In our pre-

<sup>1</sup> Synteresis seems to mean the preserving principle that upholds the soul, cf. Wordsworth, 'Prelude' (1805) iii, 116.

... Upholder of the tranquil soul.  
Which underneath all passion lives secure  
A steadfast life.

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sent state, we are like men with the lower parts of their body under water, though the rest of them rises above the flood. We must lift above the waters of this world that part of ourselves which has not been submerged, and clinging to the centre of our being hold fast to the Centre of Centres with which it is one. Though the souls of men have plunged to earth headlong from on high, their heads are still lifted above the heavens.

The argument compelled us to attribute a background of Consciousness, the full self-knowledge of Ego, to animals and plants, and Plotinus extends the province of immortal Soul even further, to mountains and stones in so far as they participate in the unity of the Soul of Earth. Soul is everywhere just as God is in all things. We have already quoted a passage from the *Enneads* referring to the indissoluble continuity of the Mystic Union, as real when Ego is called 'unconscious' or absorbed by the pressure of waking Experience as when he is swept away in the rapture of the Vision. The Saint, Ascetic and Contemplative do not gain by their devotions, austerity and meditations some momentary Union with God. The Union is there—Yonder—always, and it is their privilege to bring back with them some vestige of the splendour that shines behind the veil of Oblivion always and for ever, to illumine their daily lives. The *Enneads* contain many other passages to the same effect.

'The Perfect as possessed long since and instinctively desired is present even to those who sleep and those who behold it are not overpowered with amazement at its appearance; for it is always present and is no mere occasional reminiscence. It is always with us even when we are asleep and see it not.'—*Ennead*, v, 5, 12.

'That which is known, not by the intellect, but by a presence passing all knowledge . . . is absent from none, yet absent from all. Present, it remains absent to all save to those who are skilled to receive it.'—*Ennead*, vi, 9, 4.

'The presence of the One needs no coming. When it is not with you, you have turned from it, and though you have turned away, you have not departed from it. In its presence, you have faced towards its contrary.'—*Ennead*, vi, 5, 12.

St. Augustine's reflections on time of which we have spoken disclose Plotinus' influence and one can almost read into a passage of the Sixth *Ennead* a suggestion of the fourth dimension of the eternal 'now'.

'If the future is present in some "now", it must be present as being fore-

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conceived for some later presentation. In that "now" it can lack nothing nor can it fall short in any way. (In the eternal "now", the future must be present in complete actuality.) All exists in that "now" and exists eternally after such a manner that in the future effect may be said to follow cause. In its extension and as it were unfolding, the All is able to present one thing after another in succession, though they are all present simultaneously in that other "now".—*Ennead*, vi, 7, 1.

It would be difficult to express more succinctly the theory of time which was playfully put forward in the earlier part of this book—the One dreaming a stationary manifold universe over which its Awareness passes in time following the pattern of cause and effect. Greek thought was not unfamiliar with the doctrine of the eternal "now", a commonplace in the philosophy of the East, and we find a reference to it in the hexameters of Parmenides who lived some seven centuries before Plotinus. 'Being has neither past nor future, since it is all present simultaneously in the "now", one and indivisible.'

The interpretation of the Vision put forward here stands or falls with the analysis of Consciousness made in the first chapter. At first sight Plotinus may seem to offer no support to that analysis. We hold that Consciousness is the prerogative of the One in which alone subject and object can and must be identical and that Ego is conscious in virtue of his abiding identity with the One. Plotinus on the other hand expressly denies Consciousness to the One and in one difficult passage questions its right to the appellation of I AM or even I AM THAT I AM. Consciousness he attributes to Spirit, the second and lower Person of his Trinity, in which plurality has made its appearance and which knows itself as containing and being the Ideas, the Thoughts of God. Soul only possesses Consciousness in our sense of the word, when it knows itself as Spirit and is therefore one with the Divine—the highest phase of its being.

If we look more closely at Plotinus' words, they are found to approach far more closely to our belief than first appeared. Earlier in this chapter, we have quoted a passage in which it is definitely affirmed that subject and object are identical in the Mystic Union, in union with the One. The clarity of the Greek language saves Plotinus from any danger of that modern fallacy which by an equivocal use of the words 'consciousness' and 'conscious' seeks to derive the idea of a permanent Ego and conscious subject from the stream of 'states of consciousness',

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which in point of fact are merely objects of awareness and in themselves non-conscious, since they do not know that they exist. The active and passive participles in Greek establish a clear-cut distinction between the apprehensive faculty and the objects of its apprehension. It is true that Spirit is described as identical with Spiritual Perception and the Ideas which it perceives, but Plotinus clearly states that Spirit knows the Ideas as objects and that Spirit's self-knowledge implies the duality of subject and object. In other words the 'consciousness' he ascribes to Spirit is what we have called Awareness.

As one to whom the Vision was a familiar revelation, he knew, none better, the absolute identity of subject and object in the Mystic Union, but the words he used for 'self-consciousness' conveyed a sense of duality which could have no place in the One. He would have demeaned the Absolute and misrepresented Union with God, if he had attributed 'self-consciousness' in this sense to the Most High. He therefore makes the One transcend 'self-knowledge'. The One is super-conscious in the perfect identity of subject and object, in wakefulness beyond Being, one with himself in 'an immediate and all-inclusive comprehension', 'an immediate intuition self-directed'. In fact he does attribute to the One Consciousness in the sense in which we defined it.

As has been said, Plotinus' philosophy admits of no hard and fast boundary lines. We, by our attribution of both Consciousness and Awareness exclusively to the One and Ego, set subject over against object and fix a boundary line between them, that in his system would be unacceptable. For him Awareness permeates both Spirit and Soul and the data of sense perception find their subject and observer in the lower phase of the Soul. Yet he does occasionally come very near to drawing that distinction between Consciousness and Awareness with which we started. He argues that the Sage is equally wise and happy, when he is aware of it and when he is insensible or out of his mind. The Sage's happiness and wisdom are nothing external, but realities of the Spirit and their activity cannot be destroyed by sleep, insensibility or madness. Their activity knows no interruption and in such cases it is concealed not from the Sage himself, but from a part of his Self. As we should say, they are unexpressed in Experience and in the field of his Awareness, but they actually are his Ego in the perfect happiness and wisdom of Union with the One, that is Consciousness.

We all seek after our own fashion the solution of the problem of the

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universe, the answer to those riddles which the Sphinx of life asks so persistently. Why should Evil be and whence does it come? Why should sin prevail throughout the world? Why should life be one long manifold injustice? Why should the wages of humanity be paid in sorrow, remorse and death? Why in fine is the world all awry?

What is Plotinus' reply to this final question? Mystics all the world over feel the Vision has left in their hearts the ultimate solution of every difficulty. The trouble arises when they try to communi cate their certainty to others who have not shared the experience. From the general point of view, Plotinus' grand design of the universe satisfies every craving of reason and intuition. The Good, the Perfect, pours the exuberance of Being through Spirit and Soul down to the shadowy confines of Matter and thence all the phases of the differentiated One return to the unity of their source. Yet this perfect scheme of things entire takes no account of the falling short in the particular, the evil, pain and injustice, which without apparent rhyme or reason are woven so abundantly into the texture of life. The realization of Divine Union, continually present in Plotinus' life, may have made him attach less importance to the formulation of a definite solution than the lesser brethren to whom the light of the Vision is unknown. The memory of sin and evil vanishes in contemplation of the Divine. So at the end of the *Purgatorio* Dante drinks of the waters of Lethe and all memory of sin and guilt is washed away.

Evil and the connate question of Matter are discussed at some length in the *Enneads*, but the conclusions reached are often tentative and inconsistent with one another. Plotinus, in Dr. Inge's phrase, seems to be talking to himself. Evil can only belong to the region farthest away from the Divine, the world of Matter, which without form or quality in itself and but one degree removed from Non-Being, exists only in so far as it receives the form of the Ideas impressed imperfectly by Soul upon its unsubstantial substratum. The Divine is Light and Matter is that approach to darkness where its furthest rays fade into nothingness. Sometimes Matter appears as Evil Absolute in its rebellion against the forms of the Divine thoughts, sometimes as a neutral substratum born of necessity. Plotinus does not make Matter unreservedly an evil principle and consequently his account of the origin of Evil remains indefinite and inconsistent. Evil itself is not all bad, since it is often turned to good, but it is not for this purpose that it exists. 'In so far as Evil exists',

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writes Mr. Mackenna, 'the root of Evil is in Matter; but Evil does not exist; all that exists, in a half-existence, is the last effort of the Good, the point at which the Good ceases because, so to speak, endlessness has all but faded out to an end.'

One wonders whether Plotinus was thinking of something he had seen or heard of in the East, some captive prince manacled in splendid golden chains, when he painted this strange picture of Evil in this world fast bound by its opposite.

'Through the might and nature of the Good, Evil is not Evil only; for it appears, of necessity, bedizened with fetters of beauty like a captive bound in fetters of gold:<sup>1</sup> it is hidden beneath them so that it may not be seen by the gods for the evil it is, and that men should not always have Evil before their eyes, but that when they see it, it may be accompanied by images of the Good and Beautiful to remind them of their home.—*Ennead*, i, 8, 15.

The injustices of life set Plotinus an easier problem than the existence of Evil. The Sage, the Proficient in mysticism, the Familiar of God, soars high above all the changes and chances of this mortal life, above all earthly pleasures and sorrows, in complete invulnerability, and his felicity lies open to all who will seek it. All worldly rewards and punishments are negligible. Yet Plotinus is too intellectually honest to be quite satisfied with this argument. It does not seem fitting or reasonable, he admits, that every man should not be rewarded after his merits: that bad men should be masters and governors and good men their slaves; that the wicked ruler should commit the most lawless crimes and an evil conqueror perpetrate hideous cruelties upon his captives. How can such things be reconciled with a Divine Providence? The Creator must look at his Work as a Whole, but He should also consider the due ordering of all its parts, especially when it contains living beings, and His Providence must overlook nothing. The answer is to be found in *Adrasteia*, the law of implacable retribution in one life after another, the Greek equivalent of the Eastern *karma*.

Other difficulties arise with the Descent of the Soul and the nature of sin. In the universe, the great pulsation of the Divine carries Soul into Matter to create a world after the image of Spirit and its descent accords

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, Book II. 'Furthermore of the same metalles [gold and silver] they made greate chaines, fetters, and gieves wherein they tie their bond men.'

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with the Divine Principle. The case, however, seems different for the individual soul. We are told that it plunged into life under the impulse of self-will, audacity and pride, and an unnatural affection for what was lower than itself. 'Tolma', audacity and pride, is a word of which more must be said hereafter. It is not always used in a bad sense. Plotinus employs its adjective when he describes the identification of subject and object in the Union as a bold assertion and again Spirit is said to have 'dared' to break away from the One into diversity. If we translate it 'sense of adventure', it will fit in neatly with our interpretation of the Vision. It is this plunge to earth which defiles the soul with the encrusting filth of vices and passions, unless it has the strength to hold itself aloof and return again swiftly whence it came.

Elsewhere, the soul descends bent on a nobler mission. She has beheld the Divine Thoughts in Spirit and has been seized with a great longing to go forth and create a world after the image of what she has seen on high. If she did not come down to earth, there could be no development of her latent powers and the Thoughts of God would never have been reflected here below. Plotinus like his Master Plato is content to leave his disciples halting between two opinions, whether or not it was better for man's soul to abide in its spiritual home or to come down to its exile on earth. They are both agreed that since Evil haunts this world by the law of necessity and since the soul seeks to escape from Evil, we must escape hence and we can only escape by being made like unto God in justice, holiness and wisdom.

Plotinus sums up his inmost thoughts on the problem of good and evil in the following words aglow with his optimism which may well serve as a transition from this quite inadequate survey of his philosophy to the conclusion to which our interpretation of the Vision has carried us.

'In her divinity, a native of the realms above, soul enters into body. A god of the later order, she is borne thither by the impetus of her self-will, under the compulsion of her power to set in order that which lies beneath her. If she turns back quickly she will have suffered no ill by acquiring knowledge of evil and acquaintance with the nature of sin, by manifesting the powers of her Being in the open and showing them forth in activities and creations which, in her disembodied state, slumbered within her, latent and potential, and might as well never have been, if they were not to be realized in actuality. The soul herself would



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never have known that she possessed them while they lay dormant without outlet of expression. The Act manifests the power, which was otherwise hidden in its entirety, one might almost say annihilated and non-existent, if it were never to become effective. As it is, the daedal loveliness of the world about us fills all who behold it with wonder and adoration of that inner world which has wrought a masterpiece so cunning.'—*Ennead*, iv, 8, 5.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### THE DIVINE PURPOSE

L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.

DANTE.—The last line of the *Paradiso*.

God is Love.—1 John iv. 8.

God is both the Beloved, Love itself and Self-Love; for all  
Loveliness is in and from Himself.—PLOTINUS vi, 8. 15.

Master Lu Tzu tells us in *The Secret of the Golden Flower* that his school enjoys confirmatory signs for each step of the mystic way. In our study of Plotinus, we have observed signs confirming our interpretation of the Vision and, encouraged by their promise, we may now turn with renewed assurance to another stage of our difficult journey. It is heartening to find that we have struck upon a road which so often runs parallel to, or may even sometimes coincide with, the way by which seventeen centuries ago the great mystic philosopher climbed to the dominating peak from which he surveyed all the glories of the Godhead and the Universe. Our humbler path, though it ends in no such lonely and all-commanding summit, cannot have led us altogether astray. It may be that the writer in his youthful devotion to Plato the artist absorbed more of the Platonic philosophy than he knew and so recognized some of the sign-posts that Plotinus followed, but apart from them the Vision was his only guide.

In the days of Plotinus, the idea of selfhood was less highly developed than in our time. He used three words for Consciousness and Awareness; the first, *συναίσθησις*, might be literally translated as 'joint perception', that is the perception by a being of the unity of its parts, the second, *παρακολούθησις*, as 'close following, close connection', implying the stream or continuity of objective Experience, and the third, *ἀντίληψις*, as 'apprehension', with stress laid on the opposition between subject and object. They all exclude the identification of

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subject and object. Yet he does attribute that absolute identity of subject and object to the One just as we did, though he does not call it Consciousness.

Since those distant days, the mind of Kant, with its Transcendental Unity of Apperception, has left an indelible impression on all theories of the Self and recently Psychology has aroused widespread interest in the analysis of its activities and composition. Selfhood has taken a prominent place in the field of human Experience and it is no small thing that the conception of Consciousness on which this book is based should be confirmed by one of the greatest thinkers of all time, living in an age when the problem had as yet scarcely been raised.

If a defect is to be found in the Plotinian system, from the standpoint not of reason but of intuitive conviction, criticism would select the aloofness of the One, that Transcendence of the Absolute, which guards the self-sufficiency reason must ascribe to it by severing it from all concern with the Many. The loneliness of perfection implies indifference and Numenius does not scruple to describe the First Person of the Godhead as 'an idle King', or as Dr. Inge puts it, a '*roi fainéant*'. The mystic to whom the Vision has brought a memory of intense activity as well as of peace and repose can hardly accept with equanimity such a description of the Perfect, as many passages of Plotinus already quoted show. The One in all its self-sufficiency and beatitude, we feel, cannot be enthroned in quite the same unruffled unconcern and detachment as the gods of Epicurus and Lucretius.

Reason, however, forbids us to ascribe to the Absolute, considered in itself, anything that would detract from its complete self-sufficient independence, any reaction from the overflowing of its essence into Spirit, Soul and the material universe. It is—not it has been or will be, for past and future have no meaning in eternity—utterly and eternally indifferent to the universe of the Many that has proceeded from it. I sometimes think that philosophers are apt to be the victims of their own devices, dupes of the method forced upon them by the weakness of the finite mind. They are careful to state that in discussing the One as prior to the Many we are concerned with a logical not a temporal priority. There has been no creation of the Many in time and we must not think of the One in its transcendence of reality as existing apart from the Many. The One always is, and there always has been and always will be the Many.

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Yet when we attribute indifference to the One, we are considering it apart from the coexistence of the Many. The eternal problem which lies before us is something more complex—to account for the One which always enfolds the Many and Eternity which always envelops cycles of time. We cannot proceed, as Plotinus is sometimes inclined to do, from the One through Spirit and Soul to the Many, as though the Many was a mere afterthought. Spirit and Soul always aspire towards the One in rapt contemplation; surely the One on its side must condescend to cognizance of that which proceeded from it, the universe after its own image, lower though it may be in degree of excellence than the potentialities contained within its own perfection. It is possible that Plotinus and other philosophers may say that such a conception of the One and the Many would involve the hypothesis of another more mysterious and less accessible Principle behind it. 'So be it,' must be our reply, 'it lies beyond the scope of our investigation, for we are concerned only with that Principle which the Vision reflects in the mirror of the Many.'

If we are dealing with the One alone, reason reigns supreme in its own kingdom, for perfect reason, wisdom in the highest, is the order and identity of the One. When, however, we are dealing with the One and the Many at once, we are taking reason from its own home in certainty to a land of probability and reasoning, that discursive reason, which must proceed from argument to argument,

'. . . not the grand  
And simple Reason, but that humbler power  
Which carries on its no inglorious work  
By logic and minute analysis.'

Wordsworth. *Prelude* (1805) xi, 125.

With the Many a world of values comes into existence and values are apt to transcend reasoning, the attempt to apprehend the whole by its parts. We are content to accept the verdict of reason that in the One subject and object are one and the same, confirmed as it is by our inalterable conviction that Ego within us is also subject and object, but when reason tries to face its own decision in the order of the Many, it is met by a contradiction in terms.

As we have said, Bergson argued that modern philosophy had come to a dead end, because it put all its faith in reason and intellect, and

## The Divine Purpose

reason and intellect were incapable of explaining the whole universe. He pleaded that place should be found for intuition and our inquiry into the Vision drives us to an appeal to intuition in a wider sense than the French philosopher intended. Ego brings with him into life more than reason. 'The heart has its reasons that reason does not know.' The values that arise from the contact of the One and the Many and the birth of life often seem to gain in worth when they fly in the face of reason as it is known here below. Reason cannot approve the preference of some future and doubtful blessing to an immediate and certain pleasure nor the sacrifice of happiness and life for an unattainable ideal. At least, if reason does approve, it has been raised to the rank of Wisdom, an aspect of the Perfect among the Thoughts of God, and a stranger and sojourner in time and space.

In Ego's Experience there are many conceptions that cannot be derived from anything that he can learn from the outside world; for they run counter to its teaching. Indeed, many of them derive their value from their inherent contradiction of what may be called the laws of life. Virtue is virtue, because in life honesty is not the best policy.

'Just as "pleasures are not if they last", so virtues are not if they are rewarded. In a humanly acceptable universe . . . the just man would be non-existent. For the essence of virtue is disinterestedness. But there could be no disinterestedness in a world which automatically rewarded virtue and punished vice. Men would be good by conditioned reflex and calculation. In other words, they would not be good at all.'—Aldous Huxley. *Texts and Pretexts*.

To the ideals that fly in the teeth of earthly Experience, we can assign divine validity, as they can only proceed from Ego's Union with God. These principles are what we mean by intuition, when we set it up at the side of reason as a standard of judgment concerning the problem of the One and the Many.

We are bound to ascribe to the One in its relation to the Many the highest that we know within ourselves. If, in the light of that highest, we consider the One lost in the lonely beatitude of its self-complacency, are we not bound to feel that there is something lacking, something even that falls short of what is best in mortal life? The Eastern mystic may hold out absorption in this divine bliss as the reward and final goal of all our struggles, but to the Western mind, the man who fights the universe with all the odds against him, who can love to death, who fails,

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suffers and dies, ranks higher in the scale of values than the entranced mystic.

Man has always moulded his God after his own image. Power is a possession that few men would refuse, if they were to be exempt from the burden of its responsibility. So God was endowed with omnipotence, the instant and unquestioned accomplishment of his Will always and everywhere. At once there flashes up the picture of an all-powerful, irresponsible and irascible deity and with it a crop of capacious Hells for those of whom we so righteously disapprove and a restricted Heaven for ourselves and those who think like us. We bow down to the God of Battles and Righteous Wrath whom we have made in the image of our own Experience.

Later it may be observed that strength avails little without skill to control it and wisdom must be added to the divine prerogative of omnipotence. Knowledge is an attainment to which those who are curious as to the meaning of things aspire and they are the founders of religious and philosophical systems. Omnipotence retires into the background as a secondary prerogative and Wisdom is the Divine Essence. The Absolute is identified with Reason. There is a tendency to confuse knowledge with the process that leads to it and in the confusion the all-wisdom of Consciousness is overlooked.

It is taken for granted that Wisdom and Omnipotence must guarantee the eternal happiness of God. He has everything he wills and beyond that happiness cannot go. Man is pathetically convinced that happiness must be the crowning purpose of his life, though experience is continually proving to him that if it is, it is quite unattainable. 'If I were God', he will say to himself, 'I should enjoy perpetual felicity.' He cannot understand why a beneficent deity should not have ordained for him also happiness at least commensurate with the rank he arrogates to himself in the scale of things. Neither Power, Wisdom nor Happiness can supply the answer to the riddle of the universe.

What, then, is missing? The answer is given by the greatest of poet-mystics in the last line of the *Paradiso*, quoted again at the head of this chapter.

'L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.'

Love moves the sun and all the stars, the firmament of heaven and the universe and all that in them is. Love makes the world go round and

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our time fantasy takes us one step farther; there is no real motion in the Universe which is not caused by Love. From all her raptures and ecstasies, Santa Teresa brought back the one illumination of love divine and her Enlightenment found its full expression in the love that made her one with a loving Saviour. From those three little words, 'God is Love', the whole scheme of things as they are can be deduced as a logical necessity. Neither Power nor Wisdom nor endless Bliss is that highest of the highest which must belong to the Godhead, but Love alone. We are of one nature with the One and know in our hearts that the Love which St. Paul calls Charity is the greatest of all things.

The self-love of God for His own eternal Perfection is not enough; it must be transfigured in time into the love that 'beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things'. This quality of Love is born in limitation and mortality. As Plato and Plotinus knew, it implies deficiency, a craving for something lacking, and therefore they could not ascribe it to the perfection of the Absolute. Yet without it that perfection, judged by our highest intuitive standard seems strangely imperfect. The deficiency of the lover means sacrifice, suffering, the possibility of failure, adventure, creation and the test of death. 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' The mortal man who can die for love stands higher in the scale of spiritual values than a God who cannot love or die. The Lord of All Might and Wisdom can only rise to this greater Love by dying to them both.

A similar idea is expressed in the culminating lines of Browning's 'Saul'. As Chesterton puts it, 'Browning held that sorrow and self-denial, if they were the burdens of man, were also his privileges. He held that these stubborn sorrows and obscure valours might . . . have provoked the envy of the Almighty. If man has self-sacrifice and God has none, then man has in the Universe a secret and blasphemous superiority.'

Spinoza held that God was a thinking, self-loving substance who could only love his creatures so far as they were a part of himself and that therefore if a man would love God, he must not ask God to love him in return. It would seem that the Divine Love would fall short of the human, if the Creator on His side expected His creatures to return His love. Dr. Inge quotes an interesting passage from *The Youth of Goethe*, by Hume Brown.

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'What specially attracted me in Spinoza', says Goethe, 'was the boundless disinterestedness which shone forth from every sentence. That marvellous saying, "Whoso loves God must not desire God to love him in return," with all the premisses on which it rests and the consequences that flow from it, permeated my whole thinking. To be disinterested in everything, most of all in love and friendship, was my highest desire, my maxim, my constant practice; so that that bold saying of mine, "If I love thee, what is that to thee?" came strictly from my heart.'

Giving without thought of receiving, the virtue of Love lies in the loving, and it matters not a jot to its fulfilment whether it meets with return or not.

We have said that love implies adventure; it is, indeed, the root of all adventure. Reference has already been made to Plotinus' use of the word *tolma*, 'daring'. It may be employed in a good sense. Pindar uses it for the courage to perform noble acts, but it may also signify rebellion and impious audacity. The most audacious, the most rebellious and most foolish phase of the soul, Plotinus tells us, descends into the lowest forms of life, vegetables and so on. Soul breaks away into the evil of life through audacity and self-will. Yet *tolma* is not absolutely bad. For Plotinus speaks of Spirit 'daring' to break away from the One and though Spirit marks a descent from the Perfect, nothing evil can be predicated of Spirit, the home of the Divine Thoughts. For us, the daring that sent the One down into the Many in all the forms of life from the lowest to the highest was the courage of love and a sense of brave adventure.

What again is Love but creation? Plotinus thought it derogatory to the transcendence of the One to ascribe to it the work of creation which was assigned to the agency of the lesser Persons of the Trinity. If the One be Love, then creation must surely be its direct activity. In the *Symposium*, Diotima tells Socrates that Love is birth in beauty, both for body and soul. As love brings to birth beautiful beings in the body, so the love of the One has brought forth the beauty of the Universe.

Love, then, imposes limitations on our conception of the unlimited One. These limitations are time and space and from them springs the world of the Many. Inevitably there arises a clash between the orders of the One and the Many. The rule of simple unity cannot coincide with the complex principles of diversity and Love engenders its



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opposite Strife. Empedocles was not far wrong when he made Love and Strife, the principles of attraction and repulsion, the motive forces of the universe. If we impose a simple pattern, say one of squares ruled on a piece of glass, on a photograph of some landscape with its complexities, the straight lines on the glass have little relation to the multiple tortuous lines on the photograph which outline the objects it depicts. The law of love comes into conflict with the law of life and, in time, the lure of the immediate over-shadows the distant promise of the unseen future which for the One is always present. Imperfection opens to Love the possibility of existence; in the One it is mere potentiality.

Yet Love needs more than the manifold of the space-time world with its apparent flux of repulsions and attractions. Love can only love the lifeless by endowing it with life. God can only love what is of His own nature and yet He cannot be content with self-love. The One is of its essence indivisible; yet Love demands its differentiation and so each Ego still abides in the unity of the Absolute, the centre of its being, though in life its separation seems complete. Each ray from the central Light becomes on the circumference of the Many individual and distinct and love is born with the multitude of living things.

The apparent short-comings of Divine Providence have exercised the human mind since thought began. Established religion has usually diverted attention from the difficulty of justifying the ways of God to Man by emphasizing the impossibility of justifying the ways of Man to God and by thundering against the blasphemy of those who dare to criticize the Almighty. Yet a sense of unfairness remains. In *Paradise Lost*, even the pious reader finds his sympathy going out to the rebellious Satan who faces certain defeat and damnation rather than to God and His Son and all the angelic hosts who are *ex hypothesi* invincible. Milton boldly set out to justify the ways of God to Man and his failure in this praiseworthy intention is forgotten in the splendour of his epic. The desire to demonstrate that the Omnipotent and the Good, as a man may understand the Perfect, are, despite all appearances, identical, has inspired many religious rites and sacraments in all times and all places. God, if He is to be worthy of human worship, must bind himself in the fetters of time and mortality and come down to earth to suffer, die and rise again and such beliefs find fitting symbols in the recurrent phases of Nature. We cannot confine the historical revelation and the symbolic rituals of suffering Divinity incarnate, in their

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manifold shapes and imagery, to some single happening in space and time. They express in parables the truth and divinity of life, the universal incarnation of God. All life is God. Even those who take the blackest view of human nature generally admit that a divine spark does glow in the core of the Self, but the full implication of this admission is not always recognized. Divine sparks cannot lose their divinity or be extinguished. What is divine is and must be God, irretrievably, utterly and for ever, and the divine spark in vegetable, animal or man, whatever its manifestations in this world, cannot be a whit less divine than the divinity of Archangels, Angels and all the Company of Heaven.

In these days of scepticism, so far as the average professing Christian is concerned, there often runs beneath outward conformity with the orthodox belief in the curse of original sin, reinforced perhaps by some reference to heredity and evolution, an undercurrent of doubt as to whether innate human depravity can finally explain the mysteries of sin, pain and death. The orthodox argument is simple. God is a wise, just and all-powerful Father and nothing can proceed from him but good. The Devil like Ahriman has gone out of fashion, so everything evil must be due to the frailty of man and the sin into which he is born. He has abused and still abuses the free-will vouchsafed to him that he might gain merit by resisting temptation and persists in falling into evil, provoking most justly God's wrath and indignation against him.

Yet has God no responsibility for the nature he created? There are blasphemers to suggest that it would not be regarded as altogether creditable to the earthly father of a large family, if all his children one after the other made a mess of their lives from the worldly point of view. Fitzgerald-Omar arraigns the deity in words that have found many an echo.

'O Thou, who didst with Pitfall, and with Gin  
Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Thou wilt not with predestined Evil round  
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

'O Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:  
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd—Man's Forgiveness give—and take.'

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Finding no refuge in religion, science or philosophy, most of the serious thinkers of recent times have availed themselves of the escape from insoluble theological and metaphysical problems opened by the ideal of the Earthly Paradise. If God cannot create heaven on earth, man must do it for Him. So they set their hearts on some Utopia of justice and perpetual peace which is to introduce eternal and universal happiness into space and time. Working unselfishly for posterity, they talk of suppressing fear, though they scarcely aim so high as the suppression of death and disease, and hope to establish in a war-torn world an enduring system of political freedom and security.'

Professor E. H. Carr in *The Twenty Years' Crisis*, sums up the problem of politics with true scientific detachment in the following cheerless words:

'Politics are made up of two elements—utopia and reality—belonging to different planes which can never meet. There is no greater barrier to clear political thinking than failure to distinguish between ideals, which are utopia, and institutions, which are reality. The communist who sets communism against democracy is usually thinking of communism as a pure ideal of equality and brotherhood, and of democracy as an institution which exists in Great Britain, France or the United States and which exhibits the vested interests, the inequalities and the oppression inherent in all political institutions. The democrat who makes the same comparison is in fact comparing an ideal pattern of democracy laid up in heaven with communism as an institution existing in Soviet Russia with its class-divisions, its heresy-hunts and its concentration camps. The comparison, made in each case between an ideal and an institution, is irrelevant and makes no sense. The ideal, once it is embodied in an institution, ceases to be an ideal and becomes the expression of a selfish interest, which must be destroyed in the name of a new ideal. This constant inter-action of irreconcilable forces is the stuff of politics.'

With the most praiseworthy intentions, the reformers of the world are endeavouring to establish permanence and stability on the quicksands of ever-shifting time and even so there is no agreement as to the materials and plans of the Eternal Palace of Peace. The most that man can hope to do is to build a flimsy elastic structure which will give to the storms and earthquake shocks of unceasing change and which, if it collapses, will fall lightly and not bury the world under masses of

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masonry and rubble. Cloudcuckooland has its advantages. There can be no Earthly Paradise, and if the world is to be made better, the work must not begin with the building up of outer walls with iron laws and cramping regulations. Altruistic Epicureanism, in Dr. Inge's phrase, will carry us nowhere. Freedom and security can only be reconciled if the architect begins from within. The world can only be reformed by a change of heart and the heart can only be changed by those inward searchings which are the way to Enlightenment/

The Vision then as we see it sheds the light of love on the troubles of the world. For the sake of Love, God dreamed a world in which He could manifest all the powers that lie latent in His unity, all the Divine Thoughts, which without the universe of the Many would be unexpressed and might as well never have been. Just as strength is made perfect by weakness, so is perfection made perfect by imperfection. Consciousness turned outwards from the One becomes the light of Awareness, and Will, Knowledge, Feeling follow Awareness into the Manifold. The veil of Oblivion is drawn between Consciousness and Awareness and Ego goes out into life forgetting that he is divine and identifying himself with that cocoon of Experience which he spins about himself. So one Ego can love another, as though the two were not one in the Centre of Centres. Sorrow and tribulation are their lot, because they must not remember who they are. The One has put aside Omnipotence for the sake of Love. Yet in their exile they are never far from home. The land of Yonder, the Mystic Union, is always with them and in sleep, trance and all unawareness, they are back in divine felicity, though Oblivion forbids them to remember when they go out again to the Many. Only in the Vision is the veil drawn aside for an instant.

Any question of Ego's immortality cannot arise. Ego is eternal and cannot die. Yet the immortality of Mystic Union, absorption in Universal Consciousness, may bring little consolation for life and death to those who have not seen the light of the Vision and therefore cannot understand that Mystic Union is not a future prospect but an ever-present reality. They cannot help regarding the Oblivion of the deepest sleep as the extinction of all they prize most highly, though they wake from it so reluctantly. Many Western minds can make no distinction between Union with God, the bliss of Nirvana, and annihilation. They feel that the Self which they know and perhaps love will exist no more. Long ago, Plotinus (vi, 9, 3) told of the terror of the soul when she is

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faced with an indefinable One which she cannot grasp and how she may in her agony seek refuge in the delusive solidity of the world of sense.

A very great scholar once told me that he could not bear the thought of extinction and I thought then that the dissolution of so fine a mind was inconceivable. It is human to revolt from the thought that all our living and loving, our toil and idleness, our pleasures and our pains should be as if they had never been. Yet many thinkers bid us regard the disappearance of all our Experience and the suppression of the possibility of future Experience as the blessing of blessings. The Eastern mystic yearns to escape entirely from life and its memories and believes that this escape is the final reward of saintliness and wisdom. It would seem that what we have been interpreting as a manifestation of God's love is 'a divine fiasco', only to be redeemed by being forgotten and annihilated.

Plotinus would have us believe that the good soul both in this life and after death is the forgetful soul; it must dismiss all memories of friends, children, wife and country, all that the ordinary decent citizen would wish to remember. Recollections of earthly Experience can only interfere with the soul's aspiration towards the Good and its Union with the One. Dr. Inge quotes from Keyserling: 'Mysticism, whether it likes it or not, ends in an impersonal immortality. . . . The instinct of immortality really affirms that the individual is not ultimate.'

In this matter of personal survival, our interpretation of the Vision finds itself at loggerheads with the view so expressed. It has the *tolma* even to dissociate itself from the authority of Plotinus. After death, Consciousness, Union with the One, remains, but I see no reason why Ego should lose his Awareness and Experience with the loss of his body. Most seers of the Vision seem agreed that a sense of individuality does remain even in the fullest absorption into the Universal Consciousness. It is true that the Vision always entails the death of a 'self', the realization that Experience is not Ego as we have supposed, so that Experience seems to die. Yet Ego in his Union with the One retains an identity that he can only owe to his Experience, as though he was still connected by a golden thread with the objective self of his personality. It may be argued that in perfect Union and in death this thread is broken, but there are, I think, other and more compelling reasons why we should believe that this body of Experience, despite its composite and mortal nature, does survive and stays attached for ever to the Ego that creates it.

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On the one hand, what is it but the Experience of many lives that life brings with it when it enters an organism, behaving from the very first as if it had lived before? Surely it is easier to suppose that Ego on his coming into the world employs Experience that he has himself gathered rather than that he should draw on some mysterious storehouse of common memories accumulated by his ancestors. On the other hand, everything that we have said goes by the board if Experience is no more than Love's labour lost. The yearning for Oblivion may be easily understood, since Oblivion in Experience marks Ego's detachment from sense and absorption in the bliss of Mystic Union. The desire for eternal forgetfulness, the escape from all memories of life and time, is a very different matter. Are we to say that incarnation, the descent of the Divine to earth, was a meaningless blunder, an unhappy error to be forgotten as soon as possible? Eternity we believe enfolds aeons of time in which living beings have been for ever gathering and shaping Experience and all the Experience they have shaped and gathered is personal. The differentiation of the One goes on for ever and it is a continuous process, not a series of sudden endings and new beginnings. Are we engaged on so trivial a task that all achievement is to be wiped out as though it had never been? It is true that Ego when he identifies himself with Experience accepts an illusion deliberately willed in order that he may put off his Godhead and be able to love, but all that his loving brings him, both good and bad, is real to himself and that is real in the sight of God. In the Universe nothing is wasted and each Ego weaves for himself a vesture of Experience which marks his differentiation. The garment may be bad, faulty or good, but it will serve as the foundation for other garments hereafter. Experience may seem as perishable as the body. It has grown and is always growing and changing. Its immortal endurance depends on God's Will to love. Plato's Great Craftsman, the Creator of all Things, might address Experience in the words which he used to the gods of the heavens whom he had created: 'Since ye have come into being, ye are not immortal nor altogether indissoluble; yet ye shall not be dissolved nor meet with the doom of death, because ye have been granted in my Will a bond of endurance mightier and more sovereign than the principle with which ye were bound when ye came into being.' (*Timæus*, 41B.)

The significance of the Universe is vested in the world of values, the world of Experience, in which the Divine thoughts, Good, Beauty,

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Wisdom, Virtue, Love, are made manifest. It is unthinkable that God should ever pursue a purpose so badly that he should have to destroy what he had done and perpetually start again. It matters not at all that in the process of trial and error called Evolution, forms of life have often come to what the scientist calls a dead end. Organisms may fail, perish and fresh organisms appear, but the divine life that gives them being goes on for ever and each conscious unit of Awareness remains in contact with its individual Experience. In life, that Experience is being perpetually increased and remodelled, and perhaps we may suppose that in the Bardo, that interval between life and life, Ego takes the opportunity of setting his house in order.

In the Tibetan Bardo, the soul is occupied with the grim task of seeing through its own fantasies. We, in lighter mood, may imagine that this No-Man's land where Ego can make the best of both worlds holds the secret of the laughter at the heart of things. In life Ego's Awareness draws the veil over his Consciousness; the pull of the senses and the mind is so strong that Ego can rarely turn inwards. Somewhere in 'the lucid interspace' of life and life, may there not be a half-way house where Ego can contemplate at once the One and his Experience and, with one foot in time and the other in eternity, see himself and life as they really are—the peculiar gift they say of a sense of humour. There he might see the adventures of his lives spread out before him in an unsuspected pattern like the dream of a drowning man and find food for mirth and gentle laughter in his trials, tribulations and follies, and his own disquiet. He complained so bitterly of injustice, when all that befell him was of his own deliberate choice, that urge of his divine nature which ordained his exile to life and love. Has he more defiant than Job cursed God in the hope of death? He has cursed himself.

'Wherefore', said a forgotten heresiarch, as he was led to execution, 'let us try by our life and death to restore to the Gospel that little verse which the Evangelist not unexpectedly omitted. "Jesus wept," he wrote, because he held the tears of God a miracle to be recorded. Because the laughter of the God who loved little children was among those daily natural, ever-repeated acts which need no mention, he did not write, "Jesus laughed".'

Once again I call Dr. Inge to witness. He too holds it no irreverence to ascribe a sense of humour to the Almighty.

'In one isolated passage Proclus throws out an interesting suggestion

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to account for some of the ugliness and evil of the world. He says that "the *laughter* of the gods gives substance to the contents of the world". It is the myth of Ares and Aphrodite surprised by Hephaestus which suggests this theory to him; but I have often thought we may be wrong in not admitting a sense of humour in the Creator. The absence of this sense is accounted a defect in a human character; and there are some animals, such as the mandrill, the hippopotamus, and the skunk, which surely can only have been made for a joke. We may have the same suspicion about some members of our own species. If this is so, the laughing philosophers may be nearer the truth than their always solemn rivals, and we may allow ourselves to smile at some misadventures which worry the pure moralist.'

The mandrill, hippopotamus and skunk too may find a laugh in that drably colourless, skinny and unscented creation, Man.

Birth and death are mere incidents in the eternal life of Ego, and the doctrine of reincarnation furnishes a plausible method of levelling out the injustices which seem so flagrant in a single life. Plato and Plotinus play with the idea which is to be taken rather as an allegory of the continued existence of each conscious unit of Awareness in the world of the Many than a crude attempt to state an actual process. It is always amusing to speculate on the bodies we would bestow on certain specimens of our species, if the ordering were in our hands. Dante must have found considerable entertainment in devising appropriate punishments for those whom he damned to Hell. The interpretation of the Vision, however, carries us no further than the recognition of the law by which the One must for ever be incarnate in the Many. Indeed this statement goes too far. Our minds cannot grasp whether time and space are the only limitations to which the Absolute may be subjected by Love. There may be spheres of existence far outside the boundaries of our reason and imagination, prepared for those whose Experience in time and space has qualified them for a higher life. At least we may be sure that wherever Ego may take up finite life again, he will carry with him the body of his past Experience to form the foundation of his new personality.

Leibnitz, Fechner and Dr. Inge are agreed that the doctrine which ascribes life and soul to the heavenly bodies is neither ridiculous nor improbable and we have no reason to disagree with their conclusion, though we cannot share the belief that there are many things in the universe more divine than man; for we can admit neither comparative



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nor superlative in divinity. To those for whom the Godhead within the Self, the secret inner room of Santa Teresa's Castle of the Soul, is still closed and barred, the gulf between God and Man may seem so vast that they must try to span it by the creation of demi-gods, 'Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers', and a whole hierarchy of angelic titles. Santa Teresa's Cherub, it will be remembered, turned out to be a Seraph. If the gulf is infinite, all the creations of a Celestial Peerage will not suffice to bridge its smallest fraction. There may well be Beings endowed with intelligence and powers immeasurably superior to our own. The One may know of limitations less hampering than time and space. Yet the highest of all Beings, living in the differentiation of the One, is neither more nor less divine than we are, for there can be no degrees in the unity of Consciousness.

The index to Dr. Inge's second volume refers to the inadequate recognition of Evil in Plotinus. I am not sure that the text so indicated quite bears out this stricture, but I fear that he would pass a similar censure on what is to follow. Yet in *Christian Mysticism*, he has no word of reproach for Julian of Norwich's belief in 'a godly will that never assented to sin, nor ever shall', nor for her treatment of the problem of evil: 'Sin is behovable [necessary or profitable], but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' It is a natural tendency in mystics who lack the Christian conviction of positive Sin to underestimate the reality of Evil. Knowing like Pippa that 'God's in his heaven: all's right with the world', they are disinclined to linger over the failures and shortcomings of life. So far Sin and Evil have scarcely appeared in our interpretation of the Vision, but it is clear that no satisfactory answer can be given to the problem with which we are faced, unless account be taken of their undoubted presence in the world in which we live.

Plotinus holds what may be called the common-sense view of them. He does not conceal the repulsion with which he regards the hideous covering of vice and sin with which human frailty encrusts the soul, but he never forgets that it is only a covering and that the Divine remains within, inviolable. Men were not born gods, he says, so it is not surprising that their lives are not godlike. Man is set half-way between the gods and the lowest forms of life, and the earth is but one star among many. Yet human sin is held up as a matter for amazement as though man was lord of the universe and nothing was wiser than he.

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Plotinus' belief that every action, good or bad, automatically carries after it its appropriate consequence, whether death intervenes or not, has its advantages in conduct and affords a better foundation for morality than a system of rewards in Heaven and punishments in Hell even if Purgatory comes between the two.

One curious aspect of this doctrine that Experience is absolutely conditioned by Experience, corresponding to the Eastern *karma*, is illustrated by a book written some years ago by an Indian graduate, protesting against the inclusion of the Tragedies of Shakespeare in the list of compulsory subjects for Indian examinations. The Eastern thinker, he argued, could not admit the gloom of doubt and the possibility of Supreme Injustice which form the background of tragedy, and consequently he could learn nothing from plays which stumbled blindly after a truth manifest to all who had inherited the Eastern tradition. The protest emphasizes the gulf between Western and Eastern thought, but there seems a misconception of the dramatic art in the contention that the catharsis of tragedy is necessarily lost if we admit no ultimate injustice. Browning's optimism was no bar to his appreciation of tragic art. It is the struggle against odds, the failure that is 'triumph's evidence', 'on the earth the broken arcs: in the heaven, a perfect round', which give to tragedy its meaning and sublimity.

It is a strange anomaly that Christianity, surely in its essence a happy religion, should have devoted in its latter days so much attention, not to the contemplation of the Good and Beautiful, but to gloomy and shuddering reflection on the ugliness of Sin and ensuing damnation. The loving Father is overshadowed by Jehovah breathing forth fire and slaughter against his enemies. God like a brutal master who loves to see his dog cringe before him gloats over his worshippers beating their breasts and calling themselves miserable sinners instead of rising after each fall and trying to set right the wrong they have done.

The conviction of Sin and the sense of guilt are deeply implanted in the Western mind. Evil and Sin have been dramatized—nay, deified as the dark gods of Hell and sit enthroned in the Under-Mind among the Fears and Horrors and Superstitions of primitive Experience, side by side with the Curses and Furies of Aeschylus and the Wrathful Blood-Drinking Deities of Tibet. The damage they can work in the mind above is known to every healer of souls. Plotinus had no time to look down towards such shadowy, almost non-existent, abstractions. 'Look

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upwards to the Good,' was his perpetual cry. For him the bliss of the Vision was never broken by 'the dark night of the soul', which Miss Underhill regards as the privilege of the higher order of mystics, nor do the Eastern mystics suffer the agonies of this sense of dereliction. It is indeed one of the 'wrong paths' in the Taoist Way.

'One has chiefly thoughts of dry wood and dead ashes, and few thoughts of the resplendent spring in the great world. In this way one sinks into the world of darkness. The power is cold there, breathing is heavy, and many images of coldness and decay display themselves. If one tarries there long one enters the world of plants and stones.'

Was there ever soul more pure and sinless than Juan de la Cruz? Yet his name will ever be synonymous with 'the dark night of the Soul'.

Remorse and contrition are negative virtues. Spinoza says that we can always get along better by reason and love of truth than by worry of conscience and remorse. There is not a psychologist who would deny his saying. The black doctrines of Sin and Hell implanted in Santa Teresa's childish mind were the root of all those tortures which hindered her contemplation of God. By what perversity did she regard that taste of Hell of which we have already spoken as one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon her by her Lord? She truly felt, she tells us, the torments and affliction of Hell as if she were suffering them in her body. The very thought of it, when she wrote about it six years later, made her blood run cold. Yet she was sure that this horror was a great blessing and that the Lord wished her to see with her own eyes the place from which His mercy had delivered her. Yet elsewhere she does admit that agonies of self-abasement hinder rather than further Union with God.

We cannot dwell on nightmares of Sin and Hell that are akin to the child's terror of darkness, his inheritance from the well-justified dread of primitive man. No one can be made good by fear or hope of reward. No action performed for either motive can rank as good. It is right and proper that in worldly things rewards and punishments should maintain the fabric of society, but it is neither right nor proper that in the world of values morality and the practice of virtue should be based upon the hope of Heaven or the fear of Hell.

Dante at the beginning of the *Divina Commedia* had no doubts as to the Inferno and eternal damnation. He even asks if pity for the damned can be a sin, and Virgil replies uncompromisingly: 'Who is more wicked than one who has compassion on the condemned of God?'

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Yet Dante at the last affirmed the law of Love. And, lover of Beatrice, what was it but compassion arraiging the Lord of the Universe which made you gild with immortal beauty the loves of Paolo and Francesca whom even Hell could not part—when in your dream you swooned and fell as a dead body falls?

Few men have had better cause than Dante to project their own vindictive bitterness into the Supreme Being, but in the *Paradiso* the Wrath of God is swallowed up in the Eternal Love. Yet the unprofitable agonies of the *Inferno* remained and no doubt the poet preferred it so. His fierce nature could not be quelled to appreciate that exquisite parable quoted by Coleridge from one of Jeremy Taylor's sermons.

'St. Lewis the King sent Ivo Bishop of Chartres on an embassy, and he told that he met a grave and stately matron on the way with a censer of fire in one hand, and a vessel of water in the other, and . . . he asked her . . . what she meant to do with the fire and water; she answered, my purpose is with the fire to burn Paradise, and with my water to quench the flames of Hell, that men may serve God purely for the love of God.'

Plato defined once and for all the purpose and limits of punishment. No good man, he said, could wish to make another man worse in any circumstances whatever: he can only wish to make others better and punishment can have no other purpose. It must either be remedial or exemplary. As long after him Origen believed that even the Devil would be saved and incurred the thunders of orthodoxy for his heresy, so Plato held that no man was past redemption in the vicissitudes of reincarnation. It is true that in pictorial language he speaks of the eternal punishment of the incorrigible, but damnation finds no place in his philosophy. A certain well-known Englishman, whose recently acquired faith imposed on him a belief in Hell, was questioned on the matter by a small boy who had heard his parents express disbelief in eternal punishment. Did he believe in Hell? The conflict between natural kindness and orthodoxy produced so confused an explanation that, after thinking it over, the boy remarked: 'I think I see. You do believe in Hell, but you don't think anyone ever goes there.'

Many of us are reluctant to lose that belief in Hell which, the psychologists say, corresponds to primitive elements of fear and hate, buried deep in the Under-Mind. We are so sure that only people we dislike will go there. In the earlier stages of life, fear serves as a salutary warn-

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ing against the dangers which beset the developing organism and it is as yet too soon for Ego to learn to love the enemies which he must fight for dear life. The law of tooth and claw establishes fear and hatred as two guardians of the organism and very gradually they are pressed aside by the law of love. A tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, the rule of thumb of reprisal and revenge still plays a part in the evolution of Experience and the mysterious curse of sin with the sense of guilt which cries out for punishment finds a dark satisfaction in the idea of eternal damnation. In the attempt to hate the sin and love the sinner, sin and sinner are apt to be confused.

If we read the Vision aright, Sin, Evil, pain and death are the inevitable failures in that forlorn hope of Love, the reconciliation of the perfection of the One with the imperfection of the Many, the ideal with the real. The One in Love must always try to bring into the Many the order of its own identity and its failure is the condition of its Love. So God knows not only Love, but endeavour, adventure and creation. That there is something positive in Evil, as an eminent divine once assured me, I cannot believe. The One is the Good and Ego shares its goodness. Ego's will is always set on the best, but his intentions are defeated or at best hampered by the imperfection of the instrument through which he has to work. The One did not lay aside power and wisdom to undertake an easy task, but to face disappointment and despair. With nothing but the erratic compass of Experience and perhaps the glimpse of a star seen through the cloud-wrack to set our course, we steer the 'now' as best we can through fog and storm and our voyage is not ended when at last we anchor in the port of death.

I have seen many cities and sounded the hearts of many men and at the end of the journey, I am surprised not at the prevalence of evil, but at the abundance of good. Even in these days when the devil may seem to have broken loose in our civilization, the mystic's faith in humanity, life and God—the message of the Vision—still stands unshaken. My Experience confirms what I believe is the verdict of Psychology expressed in the old jingle.

'There is so much bad in the best of us  
And so much good in the worst of us  
That it ill befits the best of us  
To say what we think of the rest of us.'

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Ignorance is the root of Evil and our ignorance of our fellows' minds multiplies and magnifies the evil we attribute to them. "Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner." In the worst of characters as they seem to us only a little twist is needed to turn evil into good. There is so much to be said for sinners and Mr. Macneile Dixon undertook their defence in his Gifford Lectures, *The Human Situation*.

'When in *Henry V* we hear of Mistress Quickly's death and Pistol's disgrace, when we hear that Nym and Bardolph have been hanged, how many of us are so much in love with virtue as to rejoice? "I believe", said Dr. Johnson, sturdy moralist though he was, "that every reader regrets their departure." And who is so besotted as not to agree with him? Would you rid the world of their kind? "A life rich in dereliction, the life of beggars, drunkards, idiots, tramps, tinkers, cripples, a merry, cunning, ribald, unprotesting life of despair, mirth and waste"—God's tolerance for these superfluous persons disgusts you. You would contract His spacious universe into a tidy garden of saints. Yet there are lovable scamps, of whom the world is full, who astonish us by doing magnificent things of which their virtuous neighbours are quite incapable, exhibiting a self-sacrifice or a cheerfulness in adversity, or in face of death, which saints might envy. So baffling are the aspects of life when a sudden illumination comes from the heart of darkness.'

Heaven, I fear, must go the way of Hell: neither the changeless bliss of Nirvana nor the more active jubilations of the Christian Paradise can be the final end of our pilgrimage. The latter has always aroused misgivings in certain minds.

'Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mariners,

Crying: "Under Heaven, here is neither lead nor lee!

Must we sing for ever more

On the windless glassy floor?

Take back your golden fiddles, and we'll beat to open sea." '

The turmoil of life can only cease for ever when the One ceases from loving. We shall pass from existence to existence with Experience always growing richer and more varied—but time and the struggle will never end. In this life the system of rewards and punishments built up to guard morality will long be needed to help Ego on his way, warning him that mind is but a fair-weather pilot. Morality embodies the Experience of many beings and something of their Enlightenment,

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and serves to keep the 'now' on the course sanctioned by long tradition. Final rewards and final punishments we must not expect.

Ivo of Chartres' 'grave and stately matron' has burned up the lure of Paradise with her censer of fire and quenched the deterring flames of Hell with water, but she did not seek to destroy Purgatory, for the everlasting law holds good that suffering and tribulation are the only remedies of sin and guilt. The pilgrim dare not slacken his pace as he presses on through hardship and temptation, nor must the divine knight-errant lose his way and his courage in his last quest of Love. For all of us always every slightest thought and action is fraught with the gravest issues. The knowledge that every weakness, every failure, every sin must be repaired, made good, expiated with repentance and sorrow must be ever-present in the field of our Awareness. This ever-present sense of urgency must be counted among the most precious blessings that the Vision bestows. The Change of Heart and Life of Enlightenment which are born from it lie outside the scope of the present volume, and I hope to show more fully hereafter that our interpretation of its inmost meaning has nothing in common with that Pantheism which holds that since everything is God and God everything, evil itself must be good and good evil, so that no distinction can be drawn between right and wrong.

The world of Experience is the creation of Love and the activities of Love can never cease. Each Ego weaves from his Experience his own personality and there must always be a weaving and re-weaving to shape the temporal, yet everlasting robes nearer to his heart's desire. Nothing can really be forgotten: Experience is indestructible, but it is perpetually being combined, re-moulded and renewed. What are the wages of the soul?

'She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,  
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:  
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.'

Yet now and always beatitude is round about her and within her;  
underneath are the everlasting arms.

'And I shall thereupon  
Take rest, ere I be gone  
Once more on my adventure brave and new;

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Fearless and unperplexed,  
When I wage battle next  
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.'

What has been done cannot be undone and Ego's choice appears to be irrevocable. Entropy, the remorseless Second Law of Thermodynamics, rules that the direction of time cannot be reversed and that all energy is running down to undifferentiated identity, to utter paralysis and a ghastly lethargy. Against this law Science tells us there can be no appeal. Mr. T. S. Eliot sees no hope even in a Fourth Dimension and the Eternal Now.

✓ 'If all time is eternally present,  
All time is unredeemable.  
What might have been is an abstraction  
Remaining a perpetual possibility  
Only in a world of speculation.  
What might have been and what has been  
Point to one end, which is always present.  
Footfalls echo in the memory  
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.'

*Burnt Norton.*

Yet we may add another fancy to our fancies about time. Not only may the One change the general course of the 'now', but it is not utterly inconceivable that Ego may be able to explore the might-have-been. For the past still lies behind him, if he could turn his Awareness back to it, and the door that he never opened still leads to the rose-garden. If he can retrace the years, he might be able to enrich the Experience of the voyage already taken with that of one which in his past he failed to take. So it might be possible to correct Experience which is carrying some Ego too far out of his course.

The final message of the Vision as the writer reads it needs a more eloquent pen than his. Cling to the Vision and its peace, carry its Light into life by living fully and setting a high price on Experience. We must be like Hercules at once in the world above and in the world below and like Santa Teresa and her Nuns seek to play the part of both



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Martha and Mary. There are moments in life when the Vision will dawn in our darkness. 'Comes at times a stillness as of even.'

'If,' says the Chinese Sage, 'if, when there is quiet, the spirit has continuously and uninterruptedly a sense of great gaiety as if intoxicated or freshly bathed, it is a sign that the Light principle in the whole body is harmonious; then the Golden Flower begins to bud. When, furthermore, all the openings are quiet, and the silver moon stands in the middle of Heaven, and one has the feeling that the great Earth is a world of light and brilliancy, that is a sign that the body of the heart opens itself to clarity. It is a sign that the Golden Flower is opening.'

'When the soul,' writes Philo, 'has been altogether disentangled from words and deeds and become divine, the voices of the senses are hushed and all their troublesome and disturbing echoes. For things seen call for sight, sound summons hearing and fragrance the sense of smell, in a word the sensible demands the attendance of the senses, but all this comes to an end when the Spirit goes out from the City of the Soul and enters into communion with God.'—*Leg. Alleg.* III, 14, p. 6.

At the end of the *Enneads*, Plotinus calls upon us all to raise our voices in the Universal Hymn of Praise to the One.

'We are always with the One, but we do not always look towards it. We are like a choir of singers gathered round our Conductor, but sometimes our attention wanders and we cease to watch Him. When we turn towards Him, we sing with Him in perfect harmony. We are always round about Him in His presence; if not, utter dissolution would be ours and we should be no more. Though we do not always keep our eyes fixed on Him, when we turn our gaze upon Him—then is our Consummation and our Peace. There is no more discord and at one with Him in very truth, we raise our voices in the Heavenly Choric Song.'—*Ennead*, vi, 9, 8.

Yet the time comes, when the soul must pass from the felicity that knows no deceit back to the world of doubt and reasoning. The wise man, says the Master, will take no more thought for this life and the body which binds him to it than is useful and proper, treating his body as a musician treats his lyre, content to change it if it fails, ready indeed to lay it aside altogether and sing on without accompaniment, knowing that the instrument was not given him without reason and has served its purpose. Until that day, he must take up again the burden of love and press forward on his pilgrimage.

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Love is itself unmoving,  
Only the cause and end of movement,  
Timeless and undesiring  
Except in the aspect of time  
Caught in the form of limitation  
Between un-being and being.  
Sudden in a shaft of sunlight  
Even while the dust moves  
There rises the hidden laughter  
Of children in the foliage.

T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*.

FINIS

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